On Public Deliberation and Public Culture: Reflections on the Public Sphere

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REFLECTIONS ON THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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1. Introduction

In 1955 appeared one of the path-breaking studies on public communication: "Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication", by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld.[1] In his foreword, Elmo Roper gave an interesting, though somewhat silly description of the American public. In Roper's picture, the public can be stratified in six groups, whose relationships he describes as six concentric circles. In the center are the "Great Thinkers", who have developed important theories or philosophies. Around them is a somewhat larger circle of "Great Disciples", who work out or advocate those theories or philosophies. Next are - in increasing sizes - the circles of "Great Disseminators", reaching larger publics, and of "Lesser Disseminators", with somewhat smaller audiences. Then come the "Participating Citizens" and finally the "Politically Inert". Roper adds that these groups "are not mutually exclusive. A Great Disseminator in one field may be Politically Inert in another..." (Roper 1955, xv-xviii).

What is wrong with this picture, or what is missing? Some questions and objections come to mind: What are the "philosophies" or "theories" which are produced and disseminated in this way? Is the production and dissemination of these ideas only a matter of personal influence?[2] What are the circumstances of invention or production of ideas, what are the communication channels in which they are disseminated? Is personal creativity and influence distributed in such a simple hierarchical structure? The "great thinkers" model of cultural development has certainly long gone out of fashion. But what can be put into its place?[3]

This paper tries to put these questions more precisely and to provide some answers. For "ideas" or "philosophies and theories", I am going to put "public culture". For the model of concentric or hierarchical production and dissemination of ideas, I will put a model of the sphere of public deliberation (or the "public sphere", in Habermas' terms) with a much more complex structure.

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[1] My thanks to Ute Bitzer who has laboured to correct my English. The remaining mistakes I have put in later.

[2] To be fair, Roper did not necessarily suggest this. He was merely concerned with the distribution of personal influence.

[3] See the following somewhat more sophisticated picture: "Information and interpretations are not necessarily derived by atomistic individuals working on their own but are often produced and disseminated through an elaborate social structure involving specialized divisions of labor and extensive communication networks. Experts and researchers and government officials learn new things about the political world. They make discoveries and analyze and interprete new events. These analysts pass along their ideas and interpretations to commentators and other opinion leaders, who in turn communicate with the general public directly through newspapers, magazines, and television and indirectly through social networks of families, friends, and coworkers. Members of the public think and talk among themselves and often talk back to elites, questioning, criticizing, and selecting ideas that are useful. Most citizens never acquire much detailed information about politics, but they do pay attention to and think about media reports and friends' accounts of what commentators, officials, and trusted experts are saying the government should do. And they tend to form and change their policy preference accordingly.
As a result, new information and ideas can affect collective public opinion even when most members of the public have no detailed knowledge of them ..." (Page, Shapiro 1992). Note that this is again a largely hierarchical model. Beliefs may be added or changed at the lower levels, but there is no obvious feedback.

In my endeavour, I draw on two bodies of research and theory. On the one hand, there is the large body of literature on culture, especially national cultures or political culture, on belief systems, on value change, on the production and distribution of public knowledge.

On the other hand, there is the even larger body of literature on public communication - which deals, however, mainly with two special, overlapping forms of public communication, namely communication via mass media and political communication.[4]

There have been attempts to combine the perspectives on public communication and on culture or public knowledge - on processes and products. Important examples are certain parts of the literature on public opinion, studies seeking access to cultural phenomena through discourse analysis, works dealing with the "public" or the "public sphere", and generally the literature on the production or "construction" of cultural phenomena. In this paper, I am going to follow that tradition, most closely the parts dealing with the "public sphere".[5]

My main interests are in certain parts of public culture which I call "general interpretations" and "collective interpretations", and in a form of public communication which I call "deliberation".

In part II, I will explain what is meant by "public culture" and "collective interpretations". Part III then explains what "public deliberation" is. Part IV is the central part of the paper; it contains a depiction of the basic structures of public deliberation.[6] In Part V, finally, I will discuss briefly and in a very general way some interrelations between public culture and public discourse.

The description of general features of the public sphere in Part III is meant as applicable to all contemporary Western countries with liberal-democratic political systems. As far as possible, however, I have added some information on the German case, with an eye to specifics of this case and to possible changes in the last decades. I have to admit, however, that this is much more a framework for future comparative research than a description or analysis of recent German developments in the area of communication.

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4 However, I am not going to discuss these two bodies of literature in any detail. I will just borrow some general ideas from them as well as some particular pieces of information.

5 Or with "Öffentlichkeit", which means both the public as some kind of collectivity and the sphere or spheres of public communication. See Habermas 1990; Calhoun 1992; Neidhardt 1994; van den Daele, Neidhardt 1996. Benjamin Page asked some related questions in his little book "Who deliberates?" (1996). The late Karl W. Deutsch was an early proponent of a study of culture via the study of communication. The genealogy could be much prolonged, of course.

6 In his pathbreaking study on the "Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere", Habermas did not make sufficiently clear what those structures were (Habermas 1989). This paper tries to delineate basic features of the public sphere, as a precondition for the study of their change or transformation.

2. Public Culture

By "public culture" I mean all those symbols and meanings which are publicly circulating or publicly assessible, relevant to or addressing a larger public. Public culture can be distinguished from private culture, professional or expert culture, group culture or organizational culture. In these cases we have cultural elements whose relevance is confined to certain individuals or families or to certain categories of people (e.g. professionals) or to the membership of certain groups or organizations (firms, interest groups, religious congregations, sports clubs etc.).

However, public culture is still primarily, if not exclusively a national culture (as will be explained later). Somewhat simplifying we might say that public culture exists in either national or transnational form, which is relevant for national or transnational publics, respectively. "Relevant" means: known by, accessible to, interesting for, noticed by, directed or addressed to, circulating among national or transnational publics, but not necessarily "shared" by the members of these publics in the sense of being commonly accepted or internalized. (This will also be explained in a moment.) A public is a loosely bounded mass of laypersons which are connected by continuous processes of cultural transmission and communication. To be a citizen of a state is neither necessary nor sufficient for participation in the national public culture, but familiarity with a certain cultural repertoire and participation in some kind of regular cultural interaction are. A transnational public is also linked by a common cultural repertoire and regular communication, which transcend national boundaries.

The symbols and meanings which make up a public culture consist of rule systems for the use of symbols (e.g. language) and of symbolic contents or systems of meaning. How do we identify these symbols and meanings? We find them in acts or processes of public communication and expression (both linguistic and non-linguistic). We find them in the minds or memories of people - as symbolic competencies, beliefs, images and so on. We find them in all kinds of artefacts which become carriers or stores of symbolic meaning. We discover these meanings by asking people about their beliefs, by interpreting artefacts, by studying communications and expressive practices.

Discursive and presentative meanings. We can distinguish between discursive and presentative symbols and meanings.[7] Discursive meanings can be articulated in written or spoken language. Discursive meanings can also be contested. They come with claims to validity (Habermas) which can be argued - questioned or criticized, justified or defended. Discursive meanings are what is usually meant by terms like "ideas" or "beliefs". Presentative meanings are represented by non-linguistic symbols or symbolic practices (signs, pictures, music, rituals etc.) or by non-literal, figurative or poetic uses of language ("fiction", poetry, metaphor etc.). Representative meanings can be interpreted in ordinary language, of course, and works or practices with representative meaning can be evaluated and criticized in various ways. But this does not really make presentative meanings into discursive meanings. We can argue about the meaning of a painting or a piece of music or a ritual, but we cannot make it an idea or belief - even if we can sometimes *connect* it to certain ideas or beliefs.

[7] I borrow these terms from S. Langer (1957).

Now in public culture there are not only ideas, beliefs, narrations or interpretations which are discursive in the mentioned sense. There are also presentative meanings in the arts and in popular entertainment, in literature, in stories and fairy tales, in signs, photographs, advertising graphics, in architecture, memorials, public rituals, in consumer goods, fashion, sports. The roles and relations of discursive and presentative meanings within public culture are an intriguing problem. It could be argued that (especially in modern culture) discursive meanings are in some ways more basic and important. In any case I will (without arguing this point) concentrate here on discursive meanings and their articulation in public discourse.

Different kinds of discursive meaning. Discursive meanings can - within modern culture - roughly be classified in three categories: cognitive meanings, normative or evaluative meanings, and expressive meanings.[8] Expressive meanings are about personal experiences, feelings, sentiments; they can be criticized as insincere, inauthentic, unsensitive, inappropriate. Cognitive meanings consist of empirical statements, descriptions, explanations, theories - what is commonly called empirical knowledge or belief. Cognitive symbolic contents can be criticized as false or as inconsistent or incoherent. Normative and evaluative meanings comprise norms, values and evaluations, or moral and evaluative beliefs. In this area we generally find some kind of distinction between moral and nonmoral values and judgements, but the exact separation is somewhat uncertain and shifting. Moral and evaluative or aesthetic prescriptions, judgements or beliefs can be criticized as wrong or incomprehensible, and there is a lot of argument about these matters. How these disputes can be settled is, however, more uncertain than in the case of cognitive disagreements. There we have more or less established ways of deciding disputes, i.e. certain forms of evidence or argument. Although these distinctions between cognitive, normative and evaluative and expressive meanings are fairly well established in the modern world-view (despite some boundary problems), we find certain complex symbol systems (e.g. religious beliefs) and many forms of spontaneous, unreflected everyday beliefs and communications where it is very hard to separate these elements.

General interpretations and collective interpretations. In discursive public culture, there are many elements which are circulating in some way among the general public. There are huge stocks of common knowledge, especially lots of factual information, lots of recipes and prescriptions (how to achieve certain results), lots of norms, mores and conventions for all kinds of situations. There are also certain more general, more prestigious and more elaborated elements: important norms and values, certain general cognitive and evaluative beliefs. There are beliefs about personal life and personal identity, and there are cognitive and normative beliefs about the social world - about history, about basic features of the social and political order, about the future (progress or decline), about achievements, problems, crises. For lack of a better term, I will call these more general parts of public culture "general interpretations."[9] These general interpretations are the part of public culture that will be discussed in this paper.

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8 I largely follow Habermas here; cf. Habermas 1981.

9 The many things which are denoted by the term "political culture" (beliefs, values, symbols and meanings concerning the political order) are of course part of this central area of the public culture. But these political beliefs are closely interwoven with beliefs about the general social and economic order and with more general values; therefore the term "political culture" seems too narrow for my purposes.

Among these general interpretations there are some which pertain in a special way to the life of the national community (normally understood as the membership of a state, sometimes with some special historical, cultural or ethnic identifications), in certain cases to some transnational social unit (e.g. Western Europe, or the Western world in general). These are interpretations or beliefs relating to the community itself - its current state, its character, its problems, its achievements, its history, its future. This is what is commonly called collective (or national) identity. "Identity", however, is a somewhat misleading term because of its connotations of homogeneity and permanence. Therefore, I prefer to speak of "collective interpretations" or "collective self-understandings".

The following is a list of potential elements which make up those collective interpretations: There are criteria for the identification of membership or the distinction between members and non-members.[10] There are collective self-images: the ascription of characteristics or traits which are typical of the members or of the collectivity as a whole, generally linked with (mostly positive) evaluations and with collective ideals or normative models and with notions of collective interests and common problems.[11] Often there are also notions of collective honour or dignity and possibly a sense of violation if the group or certain members are treated with contempt or in other ways improperly by outsiders, or if members do not live up to the central standards of the group. These collective self-images are often linked with contrasting images of other groups and with comparative evaluations as well as with definitions of the relations to other collectivities (as friendly or hostile and so on). Within groups, there can also be feelings of special solidarity, commitment and trust towards other group members. Finally, there is the important temporal or historical dimension, relating both to the past and to the future of the collectivity:

Collective memories or interpretations of the past, possibly commitments to certain traditions and collective projects or collective responsibilities derived from the past (linking the past to the present and the future), hopes and aspirations for the future (not only for the personal future), possibly even a sense of a collective "mission". Not all of these elements need to be present or be articulated in particular, of course.

Common interpretations and shared interpretations. These ideas, interpretations or representations are collective in the sense that they relate to a collectivity, that they are ideas about a collectivity (e.g. the membership of a state or a "nation") held by members of that collectivity. Now collective self-understandings and other general interpretations *could* be collective also in another sense - or more precisely: in two other senses. They could be *common* beliefs among the members of the community in question, i.e. held by all the members or at least most of them. And they could be *shared* in another sense: they could be held with the knowledge or with the assumption that the other members of the community also accept them. Beliefs can be widely accepted in the first sense without being shared in

[10] In many cases, especially in the case of modern states, there are of course institutionalized rules for the attainment of membership; collective interpretations relate to the interpretation and justification of those rules.

[11] Beliefs about political legitimacy, i.e. evaluations of the political system that one belongs to as more or less acceptable and worthy of support or loyality can be part of these collective self-images. They might be linked, however, with more general political and moral beliefs, which are applicable also to other political systems; these are part of what I called general interpretations.

the second sense - if people don't know or don't care about the fact that they have certain ideas or beliefs in common.

Public culture - does it exist? It is of course a wide open empirical question, how far collective self-understandings or other general interpretations are really common or widely shared in contemporary societies. This brings us to some familiar objections to the idea of a common culture and to the notion of a *national* culture in particular. To sum them up, in a somewhat oversimplified or exaggerated way:

There is no national culture that is a coherent system of beliefs or meanings. Contemporary culture is eclectic, syncretist, internally fragmented, a jumble of heterogenous elements, not an organic whole at all.

There is no cultural consensus. There are no cognitive and normative belief systems which are widely accepted as valid and binding. There is widespread controversy, dissensus, pluralism, difference, diffidence, at most some fragile acceptance, imposed by the more powerful groups.

There is therefore also no core or essence of a national culture which would be relatively durable, which would change only very slowly, following largely its own logic. Cultural elements are constantly and opportunistically produced or constructed, especially by certain powerful elites, and adapted to changing political and economic circumstances.

There is therefore no identifiable national culture with a character unique and distinct from other cultures. Because of the incoherent and eclectic character of all culture and because of widespread diffusion of cultural elements all differences and boundaries between national cultures have become blurred.

And finally: There is no cultural determinism. Culture does not regulate or direct social action, like a computer programme steering some complicated piece of machinery. Instead, social actors use cultural elements as a "tool kit" for the fabrication of interpretations and accounts, suited to their interests and plans.

Some of these phrasings are obviously exaggerated. Not all of them may be consistent with each other, and some would turn out to be quite complicated on inspection. But certainly these statements have some force and make us wonder if we should keep looking for that mysterious entity called "national culture".

And yet. And yet. If we get around in different countries, if we read the newspapers, watch TV, if we go to public meetings, talk to people, if we live in a country for a while, try to understand its politics, the ways of life we encounter. Even if we talk to colleagues from our discipline, members of our own cosmopolitan profession - don't we feel very distinctly that there *are* very real and consequential cultural differences? And if we look at some of the relevant comparative literature on political culture, value change, social movements and so

on, we find at least some confirmation (not conclusive, but suggestive) of the supposed influence of national cultural differences.[12]

And even if there is some reason for doubt if there is such a thing as a national identity - what is it, then, that so many people are talking about under this heading? Or what does it mean when they talk about something they call "national identity"? And of course there is a lot of cultural invention going on, but does it start from nowhere? And do we really approach culture as a tool kit, which we can grab at will and handle freely? At least we had to learn to handle these tools and this has left some imprint on us. And where did those tools come from, how were they produced and distributed or made available to us? There might be a sphere of cultural production and reproduction with some regularities and dynamics of its own, not completely at the disposal of the cultural inventors.

Now it is not too difficult to describe in a general manner some kind of middle position between the polemical extremes. We do not have to follow the obviously false alternative between the assumption of national cultural homogeneity and cultural determinism on the one hand and the assumption of randomness or total manipulability of cultural variation on the other.

It is more plausible to describe a national public culture as a field of contention. There is a lot of variation of cultural elements, a lot of difference, a lot of disagreement. But the whole ensemble is not just chaotic, without some kind of order or pattern. Cultural elements are more a repertoire than a definite blueprint for action, but it is still a repertoire with a distinct composition. And a repertoire only exists insofar as it is already to some degree mastered by the actors - who are what they are because of their mastery of or familiarity with that specific repertoire. Contention is widespread, but not random. There are fault lines, cleavages, camps, central issues and topics, certain inventories of ideas and arguments to support different positions. Despite all disagreement, there are probably some common assumptions, some common language, some common knowledge of cultural elements. We cannot disagree about everything if we want to argue about your disagreements.

All this has to be properly specified or qualified, of course. There might be further differentiations of the public culture and the public, for instance, in addition to the alignement of adversary camps. Different parts of the public culture might be relevant to different segments of the public. Not all issues are equally important for all people. There might also be some kind of unequal access to the public culture. There might be different degrees of cultural sophistication, unequal distributions of cultural knowledge. Some more elaborate belief systems might be available only to parts of the public. But all this still allows for basic commonalities, certain common backgrounds, porous boundaries.

In order to elaborate and verify these conjectures, to make the general description somewhat more detailed and precise, we need to study public culture in action. We need to study the processes where public culture is enacted in a certain way, where it is produced and

[12] Sometimes even in a somewhat surprising way. Within the last years, for instance, we find some features of German or French policy, above all those connected to immigration, explained by the purported fact that Germany has an ethnic and France a political or republican national identity. (I will come back to this example, later).

reproduced, disseminated, communicated, fought and argued over. We need to study public communication and the role of public culture in such communication.

National and transnational public culture. One last remark before we now turn to the topic of public communication: What about the statement that public culture is still largely national culture? Is there not an emerging global culture, a lot of cultural trade and traffic across all kinds of geographical and political boundaries? Of course there are international markets for cultural goods, especially in some branches of popular entertainment and fashion. There is also considerable cultural diffusion, the diffusion of ideas, interpretations, knowledge and information. The question is whether this constitutes a transnational public culture. National cultures have never been closed systems; there has always been cultural diffusion. But diffusion and influence are still different from the emergence of a larger common or public culture. In the case of diffusion and influence, the imported cultural elements still get appropriated within a national culture. They get translated, re-interpreted, fitted into a national framework. There are guest speakers, as it were, but there is no common transnational public with a common language, common interests, common criteria of relevance which could compete in influence or importance with national cultures. There may be certain transnational subcultures - with primarily aesthetic or expressive features, like in youth culture (heavily dominated by the U.S. and, to a smaller extent, Great Britain), or in international science and its specialized cognitive concerns. And in a broader sense, there might be some kind of transnational public culture within certain areas of the world. Especially in what was commonly called "the West". There is more cultural exchange within this area than with other areas and there are more common assumptions and some elements of shared collective self-interpretations. The same might be true for some other areas. But that cannot be discussed in this paper.

Let us now turn to public communication, and especially to a form of public communication that I will call (following current usage) public deliberation.

3. Public Communication and Deliberation

What describes *public* communication, and what describes *deliberative* communication, as distinct from other forms?

Public communication is freely accessible communication, without formal restrictions or special conditions for participation. There are many forms of communication which are confined to particular groups of people, often shielded by norms of privacy or confidentiality and bounded by conditions of membership (in families, friendships, organizations and associations or other groups). Access to certain fields of communication may also be limited to people of special expertise. This holds especially for science and many other specialized occupations. In public communication, all interested laypersons are free to participate, to listen or to read and to speak their mind. (In fact, however, chances for *active* participation

are highly unequal, as will be discussed in a moment. But there are nor *formal* restrictions to or requirements for active participation.)[13]

The boundary between public and more restricted forms of communication is actually quite permeable or diffuse. There is a broad transition zone between communication in private settings and communication in informal, more or less accessible environments and in chance encounters (discussions with colleagues or distant acquaintances, encounters at social occasions or with strangers in public places), apart from the fact that many public discussions are taken up in private and semi-private environments.[14] And of course many *topics* which were traditionally considered "private" and partly banned from public communication can now freely be discussed in public (at least among consenting adults; legal and other norms of privacy still give some protection against unwanted disclosure). There is another broad transition zone between specialized or expert discourses and public communication. Scientific and other expert knowledge filters through various channels into public communication. Certain results of research at least in the social sciences and the humanities or certain publications in these fields are accessible to an educated lay public. There are specialized intermediaries and communication channels. The professions have to communicate parts of their expert knowledge to their clients (at least clients are increasingly demanding this).

There are several basic platforms or stages for public communication: Encounters, voluntary associations, public meetings and the mass media.[15] Encounters are conversations in freely accessible settings (public places): bars and cafés, street corners, train compartments and so on. The relevant voluntary associations are political parties, interest groups, public interest groups, social movement organizations, citizen's initiatives and so on with relatively open membership, where more or less open internal discussion (and also public articulation of positions) is an important part of associational life.[16] Public meetings are organized events, publicly announced and open to interested participants. The mass media finally connect many participants (via technologies of transmission and dissemination, often in connection with special markets) who do not have to be at the same place or connected in any other way than through the production or reception of publicly (if not freely) distributed messages.

It is a basic feature of most of public communication that the production of messages is the task of only a small part of the public. In most settings there are relatively few speakers or writers and many listeners or readers or viewers. For the sake of brevity, I will call "speakers" all those who make active contributions and "audience" all those who play the receptive part on some occasion.[17] This division between "speakers" and "audience" is of course most

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[13] There are obviously close parallels between my definitions of public culture and public communication.

[14] Newer research has confirmed that these kinds of private or semi-private conversations are quite important for opinion formation (Schenk, Rössler 1994).

[15] This is a slightly modified version of the description given by Gerhards and Neidhardt (Gerhards, Neidhardt 1991). "Encounter" is Goffman's term, of course.

[16] Of course, there are many voluntary associations where internal discourse and opinion formation is not an important goal in itself, like churches or sports clubs or other recreational associations. It is a matter of definition if we should include them into the sphere of public communication or if we should speak of "semi-public spaces", instead. Since I will not consider these forms in more detail, I will not decide the terminological question in this context.

[17] Here, I partly follow Gerhards and Neidhardt (1991) again.

pronounced in communication via the mass media.[18] Nevertheless, also in public meetings there are usually people on the panel and people in the audience, whose chances to express themselves are not at all the same. And even in other settings with fewer participants there is often an informal distinction between people who talk and others who mostly listen (or pretend to), even if this is not necessarily so.

Deliberation. Above I have distinguished between discursive and presentative symbols and meanings. This distinction immediately applies to communication. Hence we can speak of presentative communication (primarily by non-linguistic means or by the use of figurative or poetic language) and of discursive communication or discourse (the "literal" use of spoken or written language). There are, however, interesting and important intermediate cases, where "literal" language is combined with visual means of representation. Film (most important in the form of television) is the prime example. Now film is a mode of representation which is often somewhat similar to language because of the use of linear, narrative structures.[19] In addition, we find that spoken language often plays a very important, sometimes dominant role, especially on television. Television news and documentary are often more like illustrated speech, and there is also a whole lot of filmed conversation (or monologue). Without analyzing these phenomena any further, I will include all forms of documentary film or TV-presentation which are primarily "non-fiction" or "non-entertainment" when I use the generic term "discourse".[20]

Not all "literal" linguistic or para-linguistic discourse in this sense is also deliberation. Deliberation occurs if empirical statements, descriptions or reports, explanations, interpretations, proposals, prescriptions, normative judgements or evaluations are supported by some kind of justification, by some argumentative backing, or by some presentation of evidence. These kinds of argumentative or evidentiary support have to refer to actual or anticipated questions, doubts, objections, and they have to be open to further questioning or further objections. Deliberation is what we normally understand by debate, or discussion, or argument, or commentary.[21]

This explication may become clearer if we look at some kinds of communication which are not deliberative. Figurative or poetic uses of language, like in fiction, poetry, or satire, we have already excluded.

Mere factual statements or reports, which are just given as such, without argumentative support, without reaction to anticipated or real questions, are not deliberation. So most of what is commonly called news or reports or information is not yet deliberation. Neither are unsupported judgements, evaluations or proposals, nor expressions of personal sentiments,

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[18] There are a few special opportunities where the members of the audience can "talk back" without being selected as regular "speakers" - by writing letters to the editor, for example, or in rare cases by making phone calls to TV and radio shows). The Internet as a newer "mass medium" provides some special opportunities for "two way communication", as will be described briefly, later.

[19] Not accidentally films are very often based on "scripts", i.e. texts.

[20] We could call these uses of film "para-linguistic communication".

[21] The term "deliberation" has recently become popular in normative theories about "deliberative democracy" (cf. Manin 1987; Cohen 1989; Fishkin 1991; Knight, Johnson 1994). I take it that in these contexts, deliberation has roughly the meaning that I tried to explicate. This notion of deliberation also corresponds to the special meaning that the term "discourse" has in Habermas' writings; Habermas has also sometimes adopted the term "deliberation".

feelings or experiences. These are already somewhat tricky distinctions, of course, since presentations of "news" can in various ways be combined with commentary, and news can be framed to make a point or support a certain position. So there will be many mixed cases (like those shown in the following examples).

Bargaining, the presentation of offers and counter-offers and negotiation about these offers is not deliberation, since in these cases it is not arguments or evidence which count. All that counts instead are incentives or disincentives with which the parties can tempt or threaten each other.

All utterances which do not admit questions or objections are not deliberation. There are many ways to close a conversation to serious questions or objections. Among them are authoritative or dogmatic statements, which presuppose superior authority or expertise or some other priviliged access to knowledge which is not granted to the listener. We also find a broad class of communications which seek nothing but confirmation. Here, objections or serious questions would be regarded as a breach of etiquette, as a violation of solidarity even. In these cases, the speaker takes for granted that the listeners will take his statements or judgement as evidently true or appropriate. She articulates a presupposed consensus, to sharpen and consolidate it, to confirm the like-mindedness and the solidarity of the audience, to present herself as a guardian of group convictions and as a good and admirable person. Many political speeches in front of presumably sympathetic audiences, with their ritual repetition of well-worn positions confirm to this pattern, as do many every-day horror stories (what so-and-so did again and how awful it was) or success stories (how wonderful it was). Complaints and appeals for support often work in a similar way, insofar as they presuppose common normative criteria.[22] I will discuss some more examples for the "closure" of conversation, later on.

Obviously, we find forms of deliberation in all kinds of settings, in private communications as well as in organizational or in expert communications. Some of the more clear-cut cases of deliberation we find in certain specialized and institutionalized forms, like scientific communication or court procedures. If we look for public forms, we find them partly in discussions during informal encounters and in public meetings (although speeches during such meetings are not always predominantly deliberative). In the mass media, deliberation is almost swamped by various forms of entertainment, on the one hand, and by mere information or reporting of "news" on the other. But in the electronic media, there are forms of news commentary, news magazines and documentaries with elements of analysis, commentary and sometimes advocacy, as well as various discussions and talk-shows (many of which are mainly entertaining or expressive, however). Both in the electronic and print media we also find a considerable amount of *reported* opinions with some deliberative content. In the print media, we find much deliberative content in non-fiction books as well as in the periodical press in the form of newspaper commentary, opinion pieces, analytical or advocatory reporting, essays or other genres of more sustained argument (especially in the "feuilleton" or in quality journals or magazines). These are only illustrative examples; we will come back to these forms or places of public deliberation.

[22] I tend to think that this is actually the most common form of conversation.

The "public sphere". I assume that the whole universe of public deliberations going on in a country corresponds to what Habermas meant by the "public sphere". The same assumptions that led me to regard public culture as primarily a national culture also make me assume that public deliberation is still very much a national affair, taking place in communicative structures and processes which are centered in a given country, despite many links to other communication processes in other countries. But even within a country, the sphere of public deliberation and the deliberating public (i.e. all the participants, both speakers and audiences) are anything but homogeneous and in many cases not even tightly linked. As we will see in Part III, the sphere of public deliberation and the general public are internally differentiated in many ways. It has been mentioned already that the *external* boundaries which separate public deliberation and other forms of communication are diffuse, porous and shifting. Before I come back to the relations between public culture and public deliberation (some of which should already be more or less obvious), I will now describe some important structures of the sphere of public deliberation.

4. Basic Structures of Public Deliberation

If we look at the whole universe of public deliberation in a given country at a given time, we can identify certain basic structures which regulate these processes of communication. We can divide them roughly into social structures (the social organization of public communication) and symbolic structures of communication.

I will first look at the social organization of public communication, in special consideration of those features which are relevant for public *deliberation*. I will describe five groups of features: legal and political frameworks of public deliberation; the social infrastructure of public deliberation: organizations, markets, communication channels and technologies; the various ways in which the general national public is internally differentiated; the division of roles and the participation of different categories of speakers in public communication; and finally, the forms and the distribution of influence, and the forms of social stratification within public deliberation.

I will sketch these features with a look at some specifics of the German case.[23] Occasionally I will ask which structural transformations of public sphere may have occured during the last decades or which might be expected. But unfortunately I will provide more questions than answers. In general, this will be more a framework for further research than an empirical description of recent developments or discernible trends.

[23] My implicit points of comparison will mostly be France, Great Britain and the United States.

4.1 The social organization of public deliberation

4.1.1 Legal and political frameworks

Although legal frameworks and government practices are certainly important conditions for public communication and deliberation, I will only mention them very briefly, here.

Important legal conditions are first of all constitutional guarantees of free speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press. Of course, a lot depends upon how these rights are protected and regulated by the legislature and the courts. There are also competing rights and legal restrictions. They protect private persons as well as government officials against defamation or libel. They also protect government secrets or business information. There is also protection against invasion of personal privacy through public disclosure.[24] Finally, there are certain restrictions on certain kinds of public speech which are regarded as violations of public morality or public peace, e.g. laws against pornography or against "incitement to racial hatred" or similar offenses ("Volksverhetzung" in Germany).

There are certain differences between the various Western liberal democracies with respect to these legal regulations. Government secrecy seems to be more strongly protected in Great Britain and France and less strongly in the U.S. (especially after the "Freedom of Information Act") and in Germany. On the other hand, there is said to be more protection of personal privacy in Germany (reinforced by decisions of the Constitutional Court) than e.g. in Great Britain (Köcher 1986).[25] There have been some legal changes in Germany since the late 60s in this area. In the 1970s and 80s, following political concern about left-wing activities, laws incriminating public support for illegal activities and the dissemination of instructions for certain kinds of criminal activity were strengthened. Later attention turned also to right wing propaganda. Hence in 1994, the denial of Nazi crimes against Jews was made punishable by law.[26] There have been recurrent controversies about free speech and freedom of the press, but the debate was somewhat less intense than in the United States during the same period.

Another important area of legal regulation and government intervention are regulations of media markets or the public provision of media services, especially via public TV and radio stations. It is known that this can be done by anti-trust measures applied to media organizations, by different forms of regulation especially of electronic media (licensing) as well as by various forms of public control of media organizations (TV and radio programmes either more or less directly controlled by the government or even the political parties (Italy) or run as semi-independent bodies; in the German case controlled by governing boards with

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[24] In some countries, e.g. in Germany, there are also certain legal restrictions to the use of personal data by government agencies and by private companies. This is an important issue in the age of electronic communication and data storage, but it is not immediately relevant to public communication.

[25] British defamation law, however, is quite restrictive and sometimes seen as a threat to free speech (Vick, Macpherson 1997).

[26] There have also been some very controversial recent decisions of the Constitutional Court in this area, concerning the interpretation of the freedom of assembly (the Court ruled that the blocking of streets or gateways through sit-ins could not be legally classified as "force" or "violence") and freedom of expression (when the Court decided that the statement "(all) soldiers are murders" could not be prosecuted as defamatory as long as it was not directed to individual soldiers).

representatives of political parties and important social groups). In another momentous decision, in 1984 the German Constitutional Court ruled that licensing of private TV and radio stations should be permissible under the condition that there would be a guaranteed role for public broadcasting and further guarantees for a degree of "pluralism" in the area of private broadcasting. The German states then set up licensing bodies for private broadcasting which are supposed to fulfill this obligation. Private channels have since multiplied. The effects of the "pluralism" requirements are somewhat unclear and the position of the public channels has been diminished in terms of audiences. But the existence of the public channels (financed in part by user fees) and a still relatively strong influence of these channels seems legally secured for the time being.

4.1.2 Organizations, markets, communication channels and technologies

If we leave aside those parts of public deliberation which take place in informal encounters or voluntary associations and about which we have hardly any systematic information, we have to look at meetings and at the mass media as spaces of deliberation. These forms of public deliberation are supported by a complex and wide-ranging social infrastructure. Let me mention the most important parts of this infrastructure.

- *Organizations and associations which specialize in public deliberation* (apart from mass media organizations, which we will consider separately): There are many organizations which see it as their mission to make contributions to public deliberation - either in the way of actually producing ideas or messages "in-house", or more often as organizers of public events, as mediators or disseminators. To name just a few: In Germany, there is a network of public or semi-public institutions for "political education" or more generally "adult education" ("Politische Bildung", "Erwachsenenbildung"), among them "Volkshochschulen", "Landeszentralen für politische Bildung" and others. They organize lectures, conferences, seminars. There are also foundations and "academies", mostly linked to political parties, trade unions or churches (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Evangelische Akademien and so on), who also run programs of public or semi-public conferences, lectures and seminars. Some of them also support or organize original research on "relevant" questions. Sometimes, city governments organize public events with prominent speakers to ventilate current topics ("Römerberggespräche"). Other cultural institutions which are funded by state or city governments also sometimes organize public lectures or debates. Audiences are mostly small, especially compared to mass media audiences, but they probably comprise some of the more active parts of the public.

  A newer phenomenon are social movement organizations or public interest groups who specialize in opinion making, usually in a very professional way, with a professional staff, occasionally staging spectacular, attention getting performances, and sometimes operating on an international level. The most successful example is Greenpeace, of course.

There are some descriptions of the rising public influence of "think tanks" in the United States and Great Britain.[27] These are institutes or foundations for policy research, which fund or organize research, public conferences, publications, press releases, sometimes do seminars or briefings for politicians and present their representatives as experts to the mass media. There are no comparable organizations with comparable influence in Germany.[28] There are some institutes for policy research outside the university system (e.g. Institutes for Peace Research, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik). But their work is primarily academic, often directed at policy makers, and these institutions are generally not very visible to a larger public.[29]

- *Organizations and associations with various functions, and for which public communication is an important task*: There is an array of organizations which seek to influence public opinion, without making this their only basic task. Among them are political parties, interest groups, social movement organizations, churches or other religious associations, but also government offices and private firms. These organizations usually try to get their messages into the mass media via influence on journalists and press releases, sometimes by own publications or paid advertisements. There has probably been a general increase in this kind of activity over the last decades and also an increase in the level of professionalization: many organizations employ specialized staff for "public relations". Research has shown that these organizations or institutions and their officials are very strongly represented in the mass media (Gerhards 1996).

  Apart from governments and administrations, two other governmental institutions are of particular interest here: parliaments and courts. Both are rather deliberative in their internal proceedings, following strict rules. In both cases, deliberations are in the public eye. How much? Public interest in debates of the German national parliament is somewhat unclear. Debates are reported in the press, important debates are transmitted on radio and TV. But these debates rarely seem to grip the attention of the nation, as it were (as sometimes was the case, in my recollection, in the 60s).[30] Court proceedings are not transmitted via TV in Germany (and would not be even if this were allowed, because German court procedures are usually quite dull). But rulings and opinions of the superiour courts, especially the Constitutional Court, have been the subject of some very intense public controversies in Germany, and some Justices (members of the Constitutional Court) have become public figures in their own right and prominent contributors to public debates. Even if the public role of courts in Germany does not come close to their role in the United States, it is stronger than in other Western liberal democracies.

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[27] Über die Rolle von "think tanks" in den USA vgl. Smith 1991, Ricci 1992; in GB Kandiah, Seldon 1996; Stone 1996.

[28] In France, the Science Po may come close to a similar public role.

[29] This difference may be partly explained by the traditionally greater emphasis on private donorship and entrepreneurship in these areas, especially in the U.S. and a stronger tradition that sees the social sciences as an instrument of social reform.

[30] Nor does this seem to be the case in other Western democracies. An exception were certain congressional hearings in the U.S. (especially the Watergate, Iran-Contra and Hill-Thomas hearings), whose special dramatic quality made them national public events - or spectacles. But these hearings are more like judicial proceedings (without most of the procedural protections for the participants, by the way, which are applied in regular courts) than like parliamentiary debates.

Finally, the universities and scientific research institutes: They certainly have indirect public influence via their educational functions and as producers of research, but in Germany they do not seem to have a very influential public role as institutions (as different from the influence of individual scholars or of scientific disciplines).[31] There are no university presses, there is no visible leadership, comparable to American university presidents. Prominent public events (meetings, speeches, conferences of general interest) are rare, and there are no universities with exceptional prestige and visibility which could give special institutional significance to public utterances of their members. (For explanations of these facts, one might look at the internal structure of German universities and at their status as state institutions.)[32]

- *Mass media organizations and markets*: Communication via mass media as the largest and most influential form of public deliberation has been the focus of most research on public communication (although this research has only occasionally paid special attention to deliberative communication). I will not try to sum up the results of this research, but I will only briefly look at three main branches of mass communication: Book publishing, the press, and broadcasting (radio and TV).

  Publishing of non-fiction books still seems to be an important medium for public deliberation. Most public debates first become widely visible in the press, but very often book publications (sometimes just collections of articles which have already appeared in the press, sometimes collections of conference papers, sometimes original contributions) follow very soon. There are big and prestigious publishing houses in Germany (Rowohlt, Suhrkamp, Fischer) who regularly publish contributions to current debates. The distribution system is very well developed. New technologies have shortened production time and have made it possible to publish books of topical interest quite rapidly.

  Among the many segments of the periodical press, only the ones who seem most important for public deliberation in terms of influence and intellectual content are of interest, here. This applies mainly to the national "quality" press - both daily newspapers and weekly journals and magazines with general cultural, social, and political content - and to the mostly smaller cultural and political magazines with fewer issues per year.

  The leading "quality" newspapers and weeklies are important not only because they carry relatively large quantities of deliberative content (in the form of commentary, documentation and analysis and so on), but also because they are influential both with

[31] Universities and research institutes advertise their research efforts and successes, of course, by way of press releases, information to journalists and so on. But popular science magazines, reporting on science in newspapers and journals, often done by specialized journalists or scientists themselves, and popular books by researchers or "popularizers", are probably more important interfaces between science and the public sphere.

[32] Possibly I should also mention the public role of professional organizations (as distinct from individual professionals, which will be considered later). Two examples come to mind: Meetings of the German Sociological Association (still somewhat more prestigious than the two existing Political Science Associations) are staged as public events and are reported in the national press, but mostly in a certain ironic tone and with some criticism (saying, that the social scientists again failed to predict or explain important developments, and so on). This may reflect a certain disillusionment with the social sciences after higher hopes in the sixties. German lawyers have a regular national meeting (Juristentag), where they authoritatively pronounce on legal developments.

respect to other media (i.e. journalists working for other media) and for the orientation of political (and presumably social and cultural) elites (Wittkämper et al. 1992).

In Germany, there have only been modest changes in this area during the last three decades. There is something like a stable pluralism of leading national newspapers with different political orientations which can be neatly ordered from right to left (Die Welt, FAZ, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Rundschau, with the "Tageszeitung" as a newcomer in the 70s and somewhat special role as the mouthpiece of a certain milieu, despite its relatively low circulation). Among the weekly magazines and journals, the vaguely left-liberal, muck-raking magazine "Der Spiegel" and the more sedate left-liberal journal "Die Zeit" have kept their leading roles, even if "Der Spiegel" has come into fierce competition with the newer magazine "Focus" (which has less intellectual content, briefer reporting, and lays more stress on consumer advice) and "Die Zeit" has got some competition from the more pointedly left-liberal "Die Woche" (which has some roots in the former GDR). There are also some conservative weeklies (Welt am Sonntag, Rheinischer Merkur/Christ und Welt, and as a special case the "Bayernkurier", close to the CSU) which seem to have changed little.

Concentration of newspaper ownership, much debated after '68 (because of the perceived dominant and pernicious influence of the conservative Springer publishing house) does not seem to be a very big concern, recently. Newspaper monopolies are mainly a problem at the level of regional papers. The national newspapers have some modest internal pluralism, especially in the feuilleton and other special sections, while there is mostly a definite line in editorials and also a visible political direction in the selection and presentation of news. There are no regular op-ed pages, but some newspapers (e.g. the FAZ) more or less regularly present "guest commentators".

The field of political and cultural magazines seems to be comparatively thin in Germany, with respect to a number of periodicals and to circulation. There are a few intellectual magazines with some repute (e.g. Lettre International, Merkur, Kursbuch, Freibeuter), but comparable magazines in the U.S. and in France seem more numerous or more influential, some of them playing the role of intellectual opinion leaders (e.g. the New York Review of Books or The New Republic in the U.S.).[33] This phenomenon may be partly explained by the important role of the feuilleton in German quality newspapers and weeklies. There we find similar content as in intellectual magazines elsewhere.[34]

In the are of television and radio, we find in Germany, like elsewhere, a huge multiplication of channels as a result of satellite and cable transmission and of the admission of private stations. As I already explained, there is a regulatory mechanism

[33] A recent compilation of "influential intellectual periodicals" in the US lists the following: The American Prospect, The American Spectator, The Atlantic, Commentary, Daedalus, Dissent, Foreign Affairs, Harper's, The Nation, National Review, The New Criterion, The New Republic, The New York Review of Books, The New York Times Book Review, The New Yorker, Partisan Review, The Public Interest, Salmagundi, Science, The Washington Monthly (Brint 1994, 156). Some of them have international readerships. The small band of German intellectual magazines does not seem quite comparable.

[34] One might ask whether the relatively small number and readership of intellectual magazines in Germany has a negative effect on cultural and intellectual innovation. This is pure conjecture, of course.

working which is supposed to guarantee the existence of public channels as well as some kind of pluralism in programming, and which also sets some limits on advertising and forbids serious pornography or the depiction of extreme violence.

Critics of these developments have usually concentrated on three features: the influence of private media monopolies, increasing commercialization, and fragmentation of the public sphere. The first concern I will leave aside for the moment. Commercialization is suspected of lowering quality levels and of driving out serious content in favour of entertainment. With respect to news reporting this could mean a development towards "infotainment", where the boundaries between "fact" and "fiction" become more blurred and in any case entertainment values become dominant in the selection and presentation of news. However there is no reliable information on whether such a development really has taken place in German TV. At least on the public channels this is not apparent. TV and radio have somewhat limited space for deliberation anyway and always had. Deliberative content can be found in news commentary (usually extremely brief), reporting of opinions (also brief), in documentaries, news magazines with more analytical reporting, and in discussions and talk shows (most of which, however, are more geared to entertainment than to serious debate). Public channels present more news reporting as well as programmes with some deliberative character than do most private channels (except some specialized news channels). Public channels in Germany have of course lost viewers to private competitors, but I have not yet seen data indicating if this has meant a general change in viewer interest from information and deliberation to entertainment.[35]

As to the third concern, there is some debate whether the proliferation of channels actually causes a "fragmentation" of the public sphere.[36] But it is not obvious why a large number of newspapers should be a good thing while a large number of TV programs should be problematic. Do people lack common reference points for informal discussions if they do not watch the same TV programs any more? Not if news programs still present very similar contents. Not if people have similar concerns and interests and are able to pick the informations and debates they are interested in. This assumption is problematic, of course. But there may be other, more important influences on the differentiation or segmentation of the public than the multiplication of TV channels. I will discuss this question later.

– *The role of interactive media*: We could call telephone services and electronic data nets "interactive media" (Markus 1987), because they allow for two-way communication or conferencing. Now it is not clear to me if telephone and FAX had an important influence on public deliberation.[37] What about the Internet? Large parts of the Internet are not truely interactive, of course. It is possible to choose between lots of web sites (in this respect, cable TV and the Internet seem slowly to converge - even if web sites are more or less

[35] One recent poll found that a majority of viewers judged the public channels best overall and strongest in the fields of news and information, and that interest in TV-entertainment was declining somewhat, with increasing interest in news and nature documentaries (EMNID Survey August 97, n=1004, reported in TV TODAY 20/97, 256-58)

[36] Katz (1996) takes Israel as an example.

[37] I think the influence of the photocopier is somewhat underrated, but its main impact was in the field of scientific and business communication. The same probably holds for e-mail, up to now.

available on demand) and to manoeuver within them, but not to talk back. This "one-way" side of the Internet might become relevant one day not only to entertainment or specialized information, but also to news (which are of course already available, in somewhat limited formats) and commentary, but that remains to be seen. I am not sure if this would mean a profound change in the character of public communication. What about interactive uses - newsgroups or user groups, discussion forums, bulletin boards etc.? These mean a further blurring of boundaries between public and private communications here, since communication can be fitted to user groups or audiences of all sizes. There are optimistic and pessimistic views. Optimistic visions stress the interactive possibilities of the medium and the possibility to establish communication channels for particular publics ("electronic town meetings"). Pessimists again see dangers of commercialization, fragmentation and unequal access.[38] Once again, not too much is known empirically. There are some reports on the popularity of these things, but there is little information about contents of interactive uses and about behaviours of users.[39] What is known (Crane 1996, Buchstein 1996) points to a problem for which the label "fragmentation" is somewhat misleading. The problem lies exactly in the "egalitarian" character of Internet use, in the ease of access. From this follows a lack of selectivity, a lack of social control, a lack of orientation and guidance for users (both in interactive and non-interactive uses). There are not enough gate keepers and editors, so far. The result is too much noise, overload, too much garbage floating around, a lack of orientation in finding useful materials. There could be remedies, of course; but in some respects these might move the Internet in the direction of more traditional media.[40]

- *Circles and networks of speakers*. Another element in the social infrastructure of public communication are social networks or circles of potential contributors. They apparently exist around journals, magazines and feuilletons, as well as around certain radio and TV programmes, and they might exist also independently, as networks or milieus of intellectuals, academics, or people working in various cultural fields.

  One peculiar and interesting indication manifestation of such networks are public petitions or manifestos ("Appelle"), which are signed by smaller or larger groups of people and are more or less regularly used in Germany (although apparently on a much lesser scale than in France) (Sirinelli 1996).[41]

After looking at these organizational structures and communication channels we might ask about the relative importance of different channels for public deliberation. I will risk only one conjecture here: that the print media are still the most important form. As we know from opinion reserach, TV for most people is the most important and most credible source of political information. But is it also the most important form of participation in

[38] For an extensive discussion of optimistic and pessimistic expectations with respect to political effects of Internet use, see Buchstein 1996.

[39] In Germany, some political groups, especially some right wing fringe groups seem to use the Internet for their purposes, and the Internet seems quite useful for these "associational" forms of communication. But again, there is little information on actual use.

[40] Search engines which cannot discriminate for quality will not do the job.

[41] It would be a fascinating research task to find out how these manifestos are created and how the signatures are gathered. Who is asked by whom? And what is relevant for the decision to sign - the content, the other signatories?

public deliberation? This seems somewhat doubtful, as intellectual content of TV programming (and radio programmes) seems rather limited. Especially new ideas or arguments are much more often first presented in print than in the electronic media. This not only seems to be the case because most TV programmes aim at larger audiences (whereas print media at least for now can more easily target smaller audiences - interested issue publics, for instance). It might also be true because of the limited capacity of oral presentation, relative to the time it uses up. For somewhat more complex forms of communication, written text is simply more efficient and easier to handle by the recipients (they can choose time and place to deal with these things). Text is better to think with than speech (in any case, one-way speech) or film. TV is of course stronger with respect to the presentation of visual cues and evidence (which supports the credibility of its messages, often misleadingly so). But for the purposes of deliberation, this might be more a liability than an advantage.

4.1.3 Differentiation of the public

Public deliberation does not take place within a homogeneous public. The general public is differentiated in several ways.

One basic form of functional differentiation has already been mentioned: the differentiation between "speakers" and "audience". Among the general category of "speakers", there are more specific roles, as we will see later on. Not all persons in such roles occupy them more or less permanently; many speakers act as such only on specific occasions and become part of the audience in other contexts. Nevertheless, there is some hierarchy of activity and influence involved, some kind of stratification. Some people act more or less regularly as speakers in public contexts, others rarely do. But even among the people who act predominantly as audience (and take the role of speakers mostly in private or semi-public situations, among family, friends, acquaintances or colleagues), there are large differences in participation. Some follow a broad range of public debates, keep themselves informed on a broad range of issues, regularly read some parts of the national press and so on; some are primarily interested in a small set of specific topics and sample public contributions which relate to these particular topics; some are not much interested in public deliberation at all. This is an oversimplified description, of course, but it outlines the general structure should. I will describe features of stratification in the sphere of public deliberation (i.e. differences in activity and influence) in more detail, later on.

There are two other basic forms (in addition to functional or role differentiation and to stratification) in which the national public becomes differentiated. I will call them "camps" and "issue publics".

Issue publics are communities of deliberation which are constituted by the common interest of people in certain issues and their regular participation (as speakers or recipients) in public debates on that issue (Elkins 1993).[42] Issue publics grow and shrink, wax and wane,

[42] Policy communities or policy networks, which have been studied in policy research (Héritier 1994), are a related phenomenon; policy networks, however, are not only, sometimes not even

sometimes in cycles; they can be more permanent, oriented to issues of long-standing interest, or they can be more short-lived, oriented to issues with a shorter "attention cycle" (Downs 1972).[43]

Camps are partisan communities of deliberation. In public debates, disagreements, controversies, we do not only find speakers with different opinions. We also typically find alignments or opposing camps or "sides". This not only means that there is a plurality of people which hold one of the conflicting opinions or positions. People also see themselves as being with others on the issue and especially as being against others. Speakers and members of the audience become partisans, see themselves as members and especially opponents of certain camps. These self-definitions can relate to a certain issue. They can also be more generalized. There are more generalized belief systems involved, which generate common positions (of the adherents of these belief systems) on a range of issues. And there are more generalized perceptions about camps, "Lager", milieus, tendencies, cleavages, front lines, us and them, supporters and competitors, friends and enemies (political or more general "weltanschaulich").[44]

The phenomenon is familiar from the political sphere, of course. It has also been studied with respect to more general values and beliefs (Inglehart). Empirical research in this area is normally based on surveys which try to probe values, attitudes or beliefs of people as well as their self-perception or self-definition and their perception of the location of competing camps in the political space. But this kind of research is only indirectly related to public deliberation.

Now if we look at the sphere of public deliberation and the differentiation of the public, what might be different with respect to alignments and cleavages? If we looked at audiences in general, the difference might not be too big. There is considerable overlap between the general population and the general public. If we looked only at the attentive (more interested, more active) public, there might be differences. And if we looked at the active participants only, at the public speakers, things might be more different still. The attentive public (Devine

predominantly networks of public communication. See also the description of "knowledge markets" in particular policy areas given by Nullmeier and Rüb (1993).

[43] A German example for a more durable issue public might be the participants in the debates about environmental questions (since the 1970s). Examples for short-lived issues and issue publics might be two debates that originated in 1995: there was a brief, but intense debate (together with public appeals of intellectuals and so on) when the "Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels" was awarded to a scholar specialized in Islamic literature and history, Annemarie Schimmel. And there was a debate (with a very different issue public) about a ruling of the Constitutional Court, which said, that Bavarian schools could not be ordered by the state government to put up crucifixes in class rooms.

[44] The problem is actually more complicated. We may find (by some method of multivariate analysis or data reduction) clusters of beliefs on several issues - which goes with what. We do not know, however, how this comes about (if it is the result of some shared coherent belief system, which is applied to different issues and generates similar stances, or of some other process, e.g. imitation or conformity). But maybe we can find that there are more complex belief systems shared by certain classes of people. This still has to be distinguished from the perceptions of people about their alliances, about where they belong in some view of the political and cultural landscape, who are their friends and who are their opponents. The relationship between commonality of belief and sense of belonging (self-location) might sometimes be somewhat loose, especially if people do not have very articulate or sophisticated beliefs. (Party affiliations - in Western Europe at least - are more stable than attitudes on issues, to give one example.) In Political Science, there is a considerable literature on these problems (much influenced by Converse's 1964 paper on "belief systems in mass publics"). See Luskin 1987 for a very good exposition of some important aspects.

1970) and the elite of active speakers in public deliberation might be more or less divided or polarized than the general population, and the relative strengths of different positions might be different as well.[45]

There might also be a difference between the fault lines, antagonisms, identifications or descriptions of camps which become visible in public communication itself and the perceptions we would find if we asked the speakers in private, or in a survey interview. Differences could occur in both directions. Public antagonism might be more fierce, because of specific dynamics of public dispute. Or less fierce than personal opinion because of standards of public civility or other contraints.

There are several combinations of issue publics and camps. Camps can develop primarily in certain issue areas, but in most cases camps will have common positions on several issues. Accordingly, issue publics will be divided by orientation towards different camps. Certain issues may be "owned" by certain camps - members of different camps will have somewhat different distributions of concerns. One camp may be more interested in problems of crime and family break-up, another in environmental questions. Only some issues become equally important for opposing camps (e.g. abortion, or immigration).[46]

Both camps and issue publics sometimes develop specialized communication channels (magazines, meetings and conferences, newsletters oriented to the issue or issue area in question). In addition, some issue publics can develop into social movements, if parts of their membership more or less regularly "take to the streets". To put it another way, social movements are also the core of certain issue publics. The German environmental movement and the feminist movement are examples.[47] In these cases, issue publics heavily overlap with "camps" - it is mostly a certain camp within an issue public that shares certain communication channels. But also camps which are not linked to movements may have their own infrastructure for communication. This is most pronounced in the case of camps with an "extremist" political orientation, which are also often somewhat isolated. In Germany, there used to be (and to a smaller degree still is) a press that was published by radical left wing groups, and the extreme political right still has its own journals (the weekly "Deutsche Nationalzeitung", circulation 120 000, being the most prominent example). There is also a more or less distinct camp that is close to the Green Party and uses the Berlin based "Tageszeitung" (taz) as a medium of debate and orientation. Some more intellectually oriented conservative milieus use magazines like "Criticon" and "Junge Freiheit". Other intellectual magazines with a progressive orientation will probably have overlapping readerships dominated by left-liberal orientations (Kursbuch, "links", Neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Hefte (closer to the SPD), Kommune (closer to the Green Party)), although empirical data are lacking. The major national newspapers in Germany have of course a distinct political profile (Frankfurter Rundschau, Süddeutsche Zeitung, FAZ, Die Welt - roughly from left to right), even if they are internally somewhat pluralistic, if very modestly so, and not officially linked to political parties. But they cover a somewhat broader

[45] See the common assumption, in the case of the U.S., that the convictions of the "media elite" are distinctly more liberal than the beliefs of the general population; cf. Rothman, Lichter, Lichter 1991. But see Gans 1985, and Schönbach, Stürzebrecher, Schneider 1994 for different views.

[46] This is familiar from the study of party politics (Budge, Farlie 1983).

[47] The feminist movement, however, operates more as an issue public than as a real movement with public protest activities.

ideological spectrum and do not really seem to be the "house organs" of specific camps. However, this is also an open empirical question.

What else do we know about these phenomena in the case of Germany? There is little systematic evidence about issue publics and especially about camps in the sphere of public deliberation - about the structure of alignments and oppositions, the degree of polarization, and the changes in these relationships over the last decades. There is much anecdotal evidence, mostly produced by proponents and opponents of certain camps themselves. There is a lot of name-calling and labelling between them (which is in itself an important mechanism of boundary maintenance between camps). And there are some scenarios and story lines. I will only give a very brief and intuitive description.

The topography of camps still seems to be dominated by a central left-right dimension, and the development of camps since the late 60s can most plausibly be described as differentiations of the left and right poles. This means that there are two clusters of camps more to the right and more to the left. The camps within these clusters still have more affinities to their side than to the other. There is probably a relatively strong middle position or center in public deliberation (if we look e.g. at regular newspaper or TV commentary). Characteristically, the center does not play a very dominant role in the reciprocal definitions and perception of camps, which tend to stress polarities.

The 60s were famously characterized by the devision between the "old" and the "new left". For a brief period, the German "new left" was heavily influenced by more radical marxist or anarchist tendencies. In the 70s, however, these tendencies were superseded by the more diffuse, less avantguardist, more culturally oriented and in some respects more liberal positions of the "new social movements", especially the feminist movement, the environmental movement and the peace movement.[48] The left usually united against perceived reactionary or conservative tendencies, from certain illiberal policies in the 70s (in the context of the campaigns against terrorism) to "revisionist" tendencies in the interpretation of the Nazi past and other ideological endeavours of conservative publicists to right wing extremism and xenophobic violence in the 90s. But otherwise, positions within the left were relatively pluralist, without very distinctive cleavages within the left.[49] There remained, of course, the tension between the "old politics" of the Social Democratic Party and the "new politics" of the social movements and the Green Party, but even here differences in public positions and arguments became somewhat blurred, gradually, especially after the SPD lost its governing role (on the federal level).[50]

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[48] It was then that the "crisis of marxism" became a recurrent topic. There was, however, no very public and influential movement that *programmatically* turned away from marxism and communism, confessing its world-historical errors, as in France. Or at least this was a less popular phenomenon in Germany, with some exceptions, especially after 1989.

[49] The competition between the "fundamentalist" and the "realist" wings of the Green Party reflected differences in outlook of different parts of the membership or the potential supporters of the party, but in substance it was often more about tactical questions and in any case without wide-ranging influence on public debates over substantive issues.

[50] This is a debatable proposition. In my opinion, differences in general outlook and style between parts of the Social Democratic camp and the "alternative" or "green" camp are often more important than differences in considered positions. At least in public debate, it is often not too easy to sort contributions from the left into these camps. But I may be mistaken.

More serious rifts and cleavages within the left, and more serious confusion emerged in some controversies since the 80s. Controversies over the Gulf War (very problematic because of the commitments that most of the left felt towards Israel) and then about UN and NATO intervention in civil wars, especially in former Yugoslavia, confounded the pacifist orientations of the Left. And to an astonishing degree, the events of 1989 threw the left into confusion. It is not so easy to understand why 89 should have become a disturbing date for the left, as support or sympathy for Eastern state socialism had long been confined to a tiny and somewhat isolated minority. But the German left had serious difficulties in interpreting and evaluating the events and in taking a stance which could be plausibly presented in public.[51] In any case the left felt defensive, and debates on the "crisis of the left" started. There were also some new influences from the former GDR. Some later events, especially debates on immigration and asylum and activities against xenophobic violence, as well as opposition against a perceived rise of "neo-liberalism", led to some closing of ranks (even if there were difficult debates within the left about changes in law concerning the right to asylum). But the scenery is still more fragmented and pluralist than it was before the mid-80s.[52]

The more conservative as well as the centrist camps felt put on the defensive after the 60s, and some of their representatives started counterattacks (e.g. by organizing public conferences). Conservative and centrist public speakers since then have pursued certain lines of defence of more traditional values and cultural orientations (self-discipline, achievement, certain responsibilities and duties and so on) against the perceived pernicious cultural influences of the left.[53]

Some general defences of technological and scientific progress, of market economies and parliamentary democracy have sometimes been labelled as a "neo-conservative" tendency in Germany by left-wing critics (Brunkhorst 1997), although these positions are, by common standards, pretty centrist.

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[51] A certain embarassment about the popularity which Western political and economic conditions enjoyed in the East (apart from some disappointments, later on) may have played a role, possibly also a certain lack of practical proposals for reforms in the Eastern countries.

[52] The influence of post-modern or of "multicultural" tendencies, critical of cognitive and normative rationality and universalism, are distinctly weaker than in the U.S. or in France.

[53] Is there a "generation of 68" with strong influence in public deliberation? Conservative critics have seen such influence, not only in the public sphere, but also in the educational system and some parts of the civil service, like social work, and even among the judiciary. Given standard career paths, members of the age cohorts which finished their education in the late 60s or in the early 70s should now be in leading positions in all social areas. It is very uncertain, however, how many of them have been heavily influenced by the student movement, and in which way. There are some indications that many participants of the student movement were lucky, since career opportunities for people with university education were still quite good until the seventies. But on the other hand, the number of active participants e.g. in protest activities was quite small in the 60s, compared to the 70s and 80s (Koopmans 1996). So the student movement was small, even if quite visible. Of course it is hard to sort out general cultural influences of the period, which were important for adolescent groups, and the specific influence of some kind of participation in the student movement or of other public effects of this movement. In Germany (as in some other countries), "68" has become some kind of historical myth, and there is a certain tendency to count as effects of the movement what could be more plausible regarded as more general cultural developments which were actually among the causes of these movements.

Finally, there is a heterogeneous scene of conservative speakers, cliques or tendencies with more provocative styles, which are sometimes lumped together as "New Right" or "young conservatives". Among them are some historians and other writers which put forward "revisionist" positions of the German past (depicting National Socialism as a reaction to Bolshevism, for instance, following Ernst Nolte) and who propagate nationalist identifications and especially a more assertive foreign policy, often with some kind of distance from "the West" (Zitelmann, Weißmann, Grossheim 1993). There are also a few proponents of some kind of romantic or even mystic cultural nationalism (like Hans-Jürgen Syberberg) or of other polemicals stances against the shallowness of Western rationalism and democracy (Botho Strauss).

Interestingly, however, there is hardly a "New Right" in the British sense, no influential neo-liberal camp. The public influence of more radical free-market or libertarian positions seems quite weak in Germany.

With respect to the purposes of this paper, however, some other features would be more interesting than these descriptions of substantive positions. It would be interesting to know not only how influential these tendencies are, but also how strong the polarization between them is, how cohesive the camps are internally and how hostile in their relations to the other camps, and how much deliberation and exchange of argument occurs between them nevertheless. But we have little information about these questions. We can observe that at least some public debates during the last decades have been very antagonistic and hostile, and that they still are. I would assume that relations especially among the intellectual protagonists of conservative and progressive camps are more hostile in Germany than in other European countries, that respectful conversation between camps is more exceptional, boundary crossing in certain issue areas more rare than in most other Western countries (with the exception of the United States in more recent years). I would also assume that polarization and antagonism between public speakers, especially between intellectuals, is stronger than among the general public. Given the competitive orientation of public debates this should be expected. But all this is still pure conjecture.

4.1.4 Communication roles and categories of participants

The development of specialized roles and the participation of speakers with particular social backgrounds is another important feature of public deliberation. There is of course considerable differentiation of roles within those organizations and associations which make up the social infrastructure of public deliberation. Many of these roles have to do with organizational tasks in the background of public communication or with processes of cultural production and dissemination which are not themselves in the public eye. Among them are roles in the public relations departments of organizations or many occupations in mass media organizations, from the roles of publisher, TV-producer, editor or foundation manager (who may make important decisions in the background, especially as "gate-keepers", but typically do not themselves appear with contributions to public deliberation) to more technical, managerial or commercial occupations.

Of primary interest, however, here are the roles and social-structural backgrounds of people who immediately contribute to public deliberation and debate. Here we find typical public roles or communication roles which are located in the sphere of public communication, even if they are related to structural positions or roles (occupational, political) outside this sphere.

- *The journalist*: The most common public communication role is the role of the journalist. Now journalists have very different tasks and specializations, and there are very different branches of journalism. The journalistic tasks which are of special interest here are the production of commentary, opinion pieces or in-depth-analysis. It seems that this work is carried out primarily by certain parts of the journalistic profession. Only certain members of editorial staffs do these things regularly. There are certain varieties of elite or intellectual journalism: Editorialists and columnists, editors who are also regular commentators, the regular members of the feuilleton.[54] Some of them have close links to the political elites, many have academic degrees and close links to the intellectual and academic scene.[55] Some achieve considerable visibility and reputation, like Rudolf Augstein, editor of "Der Spiegel", or the editors of "Die Zeit", for example. Other examples would be the leading members of the feuilleton of papers like the FAZ, Frankfurter Rundschau, Süddeutsche Zeitung or Die Zeit. There seem to be fewer prominent journalists with intellectual reputation on German TV, by the way.

  Pierre Bourdieu and other sociologists have commented (with some concern) on the rise of the "intellectual-journalist" in France, of journalists who assume intellectual competence in various cultural or scientific fields (Bourdieu 1994; Pinto 1994; Beaud, Panese 1995). The German case does not seem to be so much different in this respect. Due to the important role of the feuilleton, there is room for journalists with academic qualification and intellectual ambitions and relations to other intellectuals or academics seem relatively close.

- *The representative*: Representatives are politicians or members of interest groups or social movements. They present themselves as speakers for parts of the electorate or for specific groups or movements. Sometimes they rely on some kind of formal mandate (election, offices in organizations), sometimes they just present themselves as supported by informal recognition. Leading politicians are very much in the public eye, of course. They contribute to public deliberation by giving speeches, directed to audiences in meetings and to the mass media (and not always written by themselves), by participation in parliamentary debates, by giving interviews, sometimes by writing articles or even books. Much of this is quite repetitious. Who remembers a German politician for specific ideas or arguments? Well, there are some politicians with specific ideas or intellectual ambitions: Ludwig Erhardt, Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt (now one of the editors of "Die Zeit"), Heiner Geissler, Peter Glotz, and some others. The former president Richard von Weizsäcker achieved considerable attention and influence with some of his speeches,

[54] Even if this division seems to be less pronounced in Germany than in the U.S.; see Donsbach 1993.

[55] A comparative study of journalists in Germany and Great Britain found that levels of academic qualification are generally much higher among German journalists. The study also found that German journalists are much more committed to partisanship or advocacy than are their British colleagues (Köcher 1986). A newer survey among German journalists has not supported this latter result, however (Schönbach, Stürzebecher, Schneider 1994).

and his successor is striving for a somewhat different style of intellectual leadership. In general, however, the intellectual politician who presents himself as the inventor or defender of certain important ideas and who writes regularly about these ideas in prominent places is a rare figure, probably less common than in France or Great Britain. German political careers are channeled by the parties, and talent for deal making as well as patient building of alliances and support are better rewarded than intellectual brilliance or flashiness.

Apart from politicians, there are some other types of representatives who have achieved some public recognition, like social movement representatives or political entrepreneurs (e.g. the late Petra Kelly - who also became a party politician, like most prominent social movement representatives in Germany) or some labour leaders.

- *The intellectual*: Intellectuals do not present themselves as representatives of group interests with some kind of mandate from specific groups. They act as critics or advocates in the name of more general, maybe universal normative or intellectual standards, or as interpreters or defenders of more general interests. They often rely on a reputation they have achieved as writers, artists or scientists. They do not, however, specifically rely on the special expertise they have in these particular fields, but claim a more general intellectual competence. Even if many intellectuals are academics and hold positions mainly in the university system, and even if they refer in their public contributions to their general field, they do not, like the expert, refer to some special knowledge which is primarily based on their own professional research activity. In their contributions, moral or value judgements usually play an important role (which would not be proper for the expert, who concentrates on cognitive or pragmatic knowledge). Intellectuals in this sense are therefore not simply persons with peak achievements or reputations in some scientific or literary field, but persons who regularly address larger audiences on matters of public concern. Both roles are often combined, but of course not necessarily. Not all important researchers play public roles in this sense, not all public intellectuals have solid professional or artistic reputations, either.

  Germany still has its share of public intellectuals. The influence of literary intellectuals seems to have declined, though, compared to the 50s and 60s (with some quite controversial figures as exceptions: Günther Grass, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Peter Handke, Botho Strauss, and possibly some writers from the former GDR). There are some prominent philosophers and social scientists (Jürgen Habermas and, more recently, Ulrich Beck as outstanding figures in the area of "Zeitdeutung"), but few scientists (Jens Reich, of the former GDR, is one exception). Quite remarkable is the public influence of historians (related to the ongoing debates about the German past, its consequences for contemporary Germany, and German national identity) and of lawyers (often present or former members of the constitutional court, like Wolfgang Böckenförde or Dieter Grimm). The phenomenon of intellectual celebrity or the "media intellectual", however, seems less developed than in France. Few intellectuals regularly appear on TV (with some exceptions, like the literary critic Reich-Ranicki). Not many make regular contributions to influential newspapers or cultivate their influence in the publishing business (although some do, like Ulrich Beck).

- *The expert*: The expert is credited in public with special knowledge or expertise in some area. He or she often belongs to a profession or academic discipline and has often (but not necessarily) achieved a professional reputation among the members of his or her field. But he becomes an expert only in the public sphere and his reputation there is somewhat loosely based on his reputation among his peers. Peer recognition is neither necessary nor sufficient to become an expert. (Some acknowledged public experts are judged very critically by specialists (Soley 1992).) Experts achieve their image in public appearances, and they mostly appear in public because they are known by journalists and editors.[56]

- *The advocate*: Advocates also claim special knowledge or expertise for certain areas, often based on their membership in certain professions. But whereas experts are largely supposed to present neutral or objective judgements or advice, advocates plead for the recognition of certain problems and for support for people with certain problems. Often these are groups of people whose members are not regarded as completely competent to pursue their real interests themselves. These are groups like drug users, children, people with mental health problems, or women locked in oppressive relationships or family structures. Advocates are often members of professions who specialize in the treatment of certain social problems and the support of troubled groups - professions like social work, therapists or parts of the legal profession.

The boundaries between these categories, especially between intellectuals, experts and advocates, are diffuse, of course. This is especially the case with social scientists, for example, who often (especially in Germany) see "Zeitdeutung" as a proper task of social science, where sometimes professional and public contributions melt considerably and somewhat visionary styles of giving "diagnoses" are found. It is, however, probably true that role shiftings between expert, advocate or intellectual are relatively easy, especially for members of the professions (doctors, lawyers, teachers, therapists, or the clergy) and of academic institutions, partly also for members of occupations which specialize in the treatment of public problems, like certain parts of public administration or the police.

There is yet more to be said about the different styles of these categories and their different functions in public discourse. Here, however, I can only make some brief and cautious remarks.

Different observers in different Western countries have noted (and usually lamented) a decline of the role of the public intellectual or of the autonomy of intellectual and cultural elites - towards the expert, or the journalist, or the university professor with his academic pedantry. There have also been complaints that intellectuals (of a lesser sort, as it were) have adapted to the media, especially TV, have mingled too much with journalists and aspired to celebrity status in the mass media.[57] The role of the professional advocate in public debates and policy making has been critically noted too.

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[56] Sometimes experts are also called on by governments, parliamentary committees or by interest groups, who want them to testify in public.

[57] For somewhat different versions, see Coser 1973; Boudon 1981; Jacoby 1987; Brint 1994; Bourdieu 1994; Pinto 1994.Bourdieu (1989) even speaks of "a time when artists, writers and scholars find themselves increasingly excluded from public debate, even and most especially when it involves affairs under their own jurisdiction. This is the case, paradoxically, at the same time that

What do we see in Germany? The type of "celebrity intellectual" does not seem to be very important, as mentioned already. The role of the public intellectual, however, is still quite visible, together with the influence of intellectually ambitious journalists (and some ambitious politicians). Most of these intellectuals are in fact university professors or people in junior academic positions. Historians and lawyers, but also social scientists are well represented. There are also some prominent theologians (professors also). Most of the time, professors speak more as intellectuals than as experts. Social scientists in public roles are better in presenting sweeping diagnoses and conjectures than in presenting results or conclusions from empirical research.[58] The public role of the expert generally seems to be weaker than supposed by critics of "expertocracy". The classical case of the academic expert is the economist, and economists seem to have some public influence (apart from more direct influences on policy making) in the U.S. and in Great Britain. In Germany, their influence in public debates is quite marginal. Scientists in public roles often speak more on moral questions than on the subjects of their research. The role of the advocate is somewhat more visible, but confined to certain issue areas, especially problems of the young (and more recently immigration).

4.1.5 Influence and stratification

Public deliberation is one of the social fields where inequalities among participants are very large and very important.[59] Some basic ways in which the field of public deliberation is stratified were already mentioned above. There is the difference between the general and the attentive public, the latter being more interested, more active in the sense of following public debates, of being better informed, more knowledgeable. And there is above all the distinction between speakers (people who more or less regularly contribute to public deliberation) and audiences.

Now, there are also important differences among the speakers or active contributors, or between groups or categories of speakers, which we could regard as dimensions of stratification (because in these dimensions, it is generally, if not universally regarded as desirable to have more of the relevant property rather than less). But this stratification of the sphere of public deliberation is like all stratification a rather complicated and somewhat puzzling phenomenon.[60]

There are three main dimensions of stratification: Prominence (or visibility); authority (or reputation, or prestige); and influence. Speakers in the area of public deliberation differ with respect to *prominence*, which means the degree of public attention or visibility that they attain. They differ with respect to their *authority* or prestige, which means the attribution of

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more and more people (technocrats, journalists, those responsible for public opinion polls, marketing advisors, etc.) ascribe to themselves an 'intellectual' authority to exercise political power. ... These 'new mandarins' ... no longer hesitate to assert the superiority of their technical or economic-political culture over traditional culture, particularly in literature and philosophy" (107).

[58] There is hardly any public debate where results of empirical social research are important, as e.g. in American debates about race or poverty (see for instance the "Bell Curve" debate).

[59] This should be somewhat troubling for normative theories of "deliberative democracy", by the way.

[60] It has often been discussed under the notion of (cultural) "hegemony", mostly understood as the dominant influence of a certain group or stratum on common beliefs or opinions. "Stratification of the public sphere" is a somewhat more complex concept.

competence and trustworthiness by some public. And they differ with respect to the *influence* that they gain through the distribution of their ideas.

Prominence as public visibility, as public interest in a person also determines the chances to address a larger public and to get attention for one's utterances. Prominence *may* be linked to the attribution of competence. But prominence does not necessarily imply a positive evaluation by the public. Prominence as "celebrity" can also be based on other attributes which make a person interesting, but not necessarily trustworthy or competent (being rich or beautiful or a member of the nobility, or having some kind of artistic reputation). It can even be based on a negative image, on negative "publicity" or notoriety. Prominence is a feature of the public sphere and has to be attained within this sphere (by becoming an object of attention). But while some forms of prominence are primarily gained in public communication roles (as a journalist or "media personality", for instance), in other cases prominence is importantly backed by status positions outside the immediate sphere of public communication: positions of high status in any social sphere are helpful for gaining public attention.[61] Prominence can also be bought, to a certain degree, by investing in publicity (employing of agents or agencies for public relations, staging of appearances and so on).

Public *authority* (or prestige) can refer to different forms of competence or credibility which are attributed to a person: empirical knowledge and cognitive ability, abilities to moral understanding and judgment or to evaluative judgement, impartiality, experience with certain problems and demonstrated abilities to analyse problems, to propose solutions, and so on. Having authority gives credit to one's utterances, an advance of credibility, the expectation that one's judgements are true or appropriate. This can work in two overlapping ways. It may make one's judgement acceptable without the need to convince by elaborated argument or presentation of evidence, or by lowering the demands of evidential and argumentative support.[62] In this case, judgements of an authoritative speaker are taken on trust. Or it may gain more intense and serious attention to one's arguments. Authority can have institutional backing: being a member of prestigious institutions or being certified by them or being in prestitious formal roles (e.g. as scientist, university professor etc.) can improve one's authority.[63] The acceptance of positions or ideas is also directly influenced, of course, by the prestige of certain institutions (if they become "official" positions) and by the prestige of communication channels (e.g. by the prestige of newspapers or magazines). In this sense, there is also a stratification of institutions, organizations and communication channels in the public sphere with respect to prestige.

Public influence of a person means the degree to which his ideas make a difference by becoming accepted and by changing convictions or perceptions. Personal influence in this sense is related to, but different from the influence of ideas, because ideas cannot always be attributed to specific persons. Personal influence in my sense can be measured only in those cases where such an attribution is possible.

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[61] For "prominence" see the study of Birgit Peters (1995); for "celebrity" Gamson 1994.

[62] This meaning of "authority" corresponds with Parsons' notion of "influence" (Parsons 1967; Mayhew 1990), while my use of "influence" is different.

[63] But *public* authority nevertheless depends on voluntary recognition by some public; it is therefore different from formal authority in organizational or political contexts; it is not the authority to make binding decisions.

To a large extent, public influence is a multiplicative function of visibility and authority. Being prominent and having a high reputation are the best conditions for seeing one's ideas distributed and accepted. It is not all that easy, though. Influence is also determined by institutional location and relevant social connections. Journalists in certain positions, for instance, might not be especially well known personally, they might not necessarily have very high prestige (among the attentive public or the elite), but they might nevertheless have some influence because of their ability to get their ideas published in influential places. This shades into another form of influence, which is not itself public - i.e. the influence of decision makers or gate keepers "behind the scene", whose decisions affect the circulation of ideas without directly contributing to them.[64]

There is also the vexing question of how authority (in the sense defined above) or recognition are related to demonstrated ability, achievement or productivity. Conceptually, at least, it seems plausible to identify "productivity" as a separate dimension, closely related to authority, but still different. Productivity relates to the production of new and important public ideas. It denotes the extent to which a person makes interesting, innovative contributions which enrich the stock of publicly circulating ideas. Productivity should normally lead to some kind of prominence and authority (it is rarely the case that somebody produces influential ideas in anonymity - if ideas get known, their inventors often also do). But the relationship is not invariable. The one who gets the credit is not always the one who first had the idea. And it is somewhat uncertain how close the correlation is between acknowledged authority or reputation and real productivity or innovativeness. But we can probably suppose that in almost all cases where somebody gets some important ideas in public circulation, he must have been at least acknowledged by some smaller circle of public communicators - otherwise the ideas would not have got into public circulation at all. See for instance the phenomenon of the intellectual who exerts his influence more or less behind the scenes, so to speak. Niklas Luhmann or Carl Schmitt might be German examples. Their influence is made visible more through intellectual followers, who read the more esoteric works or were influenced by personal contact.[65]

Yet there is further complexity. Authority in the sense defined implies at least some degree of prominence. One cannot have prestige without being known. Authority also makes access to the public sphere easier and thus furthers visibility, via influence on the decisions of gate keepers. But the distribution of prominence as well as the distribution of authority or prestige are related to the differentiation of the public in issue publics and camps, as well as to the differentiation between general and attentive publics. One can be prominent within a particular issue public or camp, without being widely known elsewhere. And reputation can be centered in a larger public or in some particular part of it (i.e. in a certain camp or issue public).

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[64] In addition, one should not suppose that all influences on the distribution of ideas are reducible to either public influence or to the influence of decision makers behind the scene. Organizational mechanisms, network structures, market processes and similar factors, which are not reducible to intentional decisions, can also be decisive.

[65] This phenomenon is similar to the impact of *professional* reputation or influence on *public* influence. Professional influence or reputation - e.g. as a scientist - can become publicly relevant via dissemination of knowledge or ideas, which is done by others.

Reputation or authority may also be doubly stratified, as it were. There might be a general hierarchy of prestige among some larger public (the national public or some issue public) and a different hierarchy which is recognized by the members of the attentive public. There may be speakers which are relatively well known to and much respected by the attentive public - the connoisseurs - without being very well known among the wider public. And there may still be another hierarchy of prestige among the still smaller circle of active speakers or among the more prestigious people themselves - among the public elite. There might be smaller groups of active participants which primarily recognize each other and compete for each others recognition, without necessarily being well known or recognized by the larger public or even the attentive public (the "intellectual elite" in the sense of Kadushin (1975)). The hierarchy of prestige among the intellectual elite may nevertheless be relevant for the *influence* of speakers among the larger public. There might be a cascading effect. Prestige among peers might further the acceptance and circulation of ideas, which might then "trickle down", become disseminated by followers and popularizers.[66]

What do we know empirically about these complex relationships? In a systematic way, only rather little. Prominence or visibility might be easiest to deal with. Whom do people know, whom do they find interesting? In a German study, prominence was measured via the question whom people would have invited to a talk show (Peters 1995). Among the people named at least three times, politicians, journalists, TV entertainers and athletes were in leading positions. There were also some pop artists and movie stars, who were mostly mentioned somewhat lower down the list. And there were two writers (Günther Grass, Johann Mario Simmel), but nobody else who could unquestionably be identified as intellectual; nor were there any scientists.

Now these results do not seem to measure authority, and certainly they do not measure influence, even among the larger, less attentive public. But what do we know about these much more complicated phenomena, or how could we learn about them?

In public discourse, we hear of course a lot of judgements about reputation and influence. This is part of the game. We know the big names, who would be invited to important conferences or other public events. (Some of them were mentioned above, when I was talking about the categories of representative and intellectual.) We hear that the influence of this or that person is declining or rising, or that somebody's reputation is certainly overblown. We hear that this or that group of intellectuals is in ascendancy or decline. Different intellectual camps accuse each other of hegemony or declare each other as obsolete, or attribute dangerous influence to each other. Actually, these judgements seem to be somewhat more diffuse, even if equally or more polemical in Germany than in the U.S. or in France (where intellectual camps and fashions seem somewhat more clearly delineated). But this is also a very unsystematic observation.

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[66] This description touches another important aspect of authority or prestige: i.e., the *value* of prestige for its bearers or recipients. What is their important reference group? Do they primarily want the recognition of a larger public, or the recognition of the members of their own camp, or the recognition of the connoisseurs, or what they regard as their intellectual peers? If we want to explain the behaviour of speakers in public deliberation, these will certainly be important considerations.

From science studies we know about the difficulties to study reputation and influence. There, it is mainly done in two ways: by citation counts and by reputational studies, based on reputational rankings among peers. The method of citation counts cannot immediately be applied to the study of public deliberation, since very little formal citation occurs there. Of course one could count who is quoted or referred to in public deliberations, and this has been done occasionally.[67] But the results are very limited, and it is not very clear how they could be interpreted as measures of influence or authority. The reputational method has been applied in Kadushin's older study on the "American intellectual elite" (1975) and also by the French magazine "Lire" in a survey among journalists and other members of the cultural scene about the most important French intellectuals.[68] In these cases it is of course a vexing question who should be asked to judge the reputation or influence of public speakers.[69] This has to do with the complicated structure or reputation (reputation for whom?) which was described above. Nevertheless this seems to be a plausible way to look at influence. But up to now, studies of this kind have not been done in Germany, as far as I am aware, and for once, I am not going to speculate.

4.2 Symbolic structures of public deliberation

There are many symbolic structures of communication which have been studied in the fields of linguistics, socio-linguistics, argumentation theory, conservation analysis, communication studies and so on: grammars, semantics, pragmatic ground rules, rhetorical practices, strategies of persuasion and so on. I will only refer to a few of these symbolic structures which seem particularly relevant to the study of public deliberation.

4.2.1 Symbolic boundaries of deliberation

As I said above, deliberation denotes a broad class of public communication, which is characterized by the attempt to provide some kind of justification or evidence, some kind of argumentative or evidential support for statements or judgements, explanations or proposals, some kind of anticipation of doubt, openness for questions and objections, recognition of fallibility.

I would not require explicit acknowledgment of objections or explicit reference to different positions to speak of deliberation. But simple reiteration of assertions or presentation as obvious truths, with no reason to doubt, would not be deliberation. Personal sincerity of participants should also not be included in the definition - sincerity in the sense that participants aim only at reaching a reasoned consensus about what is true or right.[70] In a debate, it is very hard to tell what people are personally up to, and personal motives are often quite mixed. It should be sufficient that reasons *are* given.

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[67] Gerhards (1996) gives a rough classification of speakers who were either authors or were quoted or referred to in the German abortion debate (check).

[68] Brint (1994) applied the same reputational method to the prestige (or influence?) of intellectual journals. Lamont tried to track the development of the influence of a single author (Derrida) (Lamont 1987), partly by publication counts and some other indicators.

[69] See Bourdieu's somewhat outraged commentary on the "Lire" survey and on Kadushin (Bourdieu 1984).

[70] Habermas includes this among the "presuppositions" of discourse.

But there are certain ways of treating controversial positions as well as people who hold opposing positions which put these positions or people outside the universe of deliberation, which does not treat them as legitimate elements or participants of deliberation. In these cases, positions or opponents are either ignored or merely treated as objects - possibly as objects of deliberation (not only as objects of abuse, for instance), but not as *parts* of deliberation.

Positions can be treated not as merely wrong, not as some kind of error or legitimate disagreement, but as absurd or irrational. Such beliefs or positions have to be *explained* - as result of false consciousness, of some kind of mental illness, of bad faith and so on. Accordingly, opponents can be treated as victims of false consciousness or manipulation, as irrational, insane or evil. In this sense, opposing positions and opponents become objects of explanation and possibly, if not necessary, of condemnation, moral indignation, or contempt. If one still feels the need to argue against these positions, if one feels the need to demonstrate that they *are* in fact absurd or evil, there is still some kind of deliberation towards those opposing positions, even if it may hardly be possible to sincerely argue with the opponents themselves. So this kind of discourse will be addressed to *other* people whom one finds more reasonable and sympathetic and with whom one talks about those pernicious positions.[71] If one meets an opponent who refuses to argue or listen, one has of course no other choice.

In general, the openness of communication and its deliberative character critically depend on the anticipation and recognition of legitimate doubt or dissent. Among the most interesting tasks in the study of public deliberation is the examination of ways in which symbolic opening and closure are achieved and of conditions which lead to openness or closure in public communication.

Among these conditions, norms of civility or fairness may be important. But there are other factors - conflict histories, degrees of hostility (which can have various causes), more or less open (reflexive) or closed (dogmatic) belief systems.[72]

But there are always limits to openness, boundaries of deliberation. In every universe of discourse, some positions or arguments will be regarded as nonsensical by the majority, as incomprehensible, obviously false, not worthy of serious consideration. Nobody wants to discuss whether the earth is flat, even if somebody should maintain this.

This problem of boundaries is especially complicated in the case of moral disagreement. There is broad variation in the kinds of moral deliberation - from earnest, dispassionate debate with full moral respect for different positions (even if we find them wrong) to more passionate controversies with accusatory elements (but still with a readiness to listen to the other's position and with some kind of expectation that we could be wrong) to condemnation and contempt, when we are confronted with positions which seem out of moral bounds, so to speak. In fact, moral disagreements are often characterized by passion, indignation, outrage,

[71] Of course there are other ways in which deliberation can go wrong, can exclude opponents, above all intentional or grossly negligent misrepresentation of positions or just misunderstandings.

[72] This is probably related to, but different from the readiness to tolerate dissent. Where toleration starts, deliberation ends; we just degree to disagree, live and let live. But this is too simple: We may be tolerant towards certain practices, but continue to deliberate upon them.

especially if we experience violations of moral principles which we think important or if we see violations of ones own rights or personal integrity. The recognition of legitimate moral doubt or disagreement is often difficult to maintain where not just hypothetical problems, but practical decisions are involved.

In order to give just one example for mechanisms of closure, let us again briefly mention some well known German experiences. During postwar German history, there have been some extreme forms of public polarization between left and right, culminating in the 60s and 70s. The right used to accuse the left of being enemies of the state and its constitutional order (later topped by the accusation of complicity with terrorism) and of complicity with the external enemy, i.e. communism. The left in turn has tended to link its opponents to national socialism. Both strategies put the opponent out of the universe of acceptable disagreement. On the left, there is an interesting additional factor: the influence of the theories of "false consciousness" and the tradition of "criticism" understood as critism of "ideology". This may be a legitimate mode of analysis, but it makes for some difficulty in deliberation with the bearers of false consciousness. Now this mode of analysis has gone somewhat out of fashion. But the more extreme forms of mutual moral suspicion and condemnation tend to reappear especially in debates, where interpretations of the German past are involved. It is of course somewhat unclear whether Germany really is exceptional in this respect.[73]

4.2.2 Types of argument. Symbolic frameworks

There are several basic types of deliberation, or several distinct forms of argument within deliberation, all with their specific rules or conventions of evidence or justification.[74] There is *empirical or pragmatic* argument, *moral and legal argument*, *evaluative argument*.[75] There are also certain kinds of "metacommunication".

- *Empirical argument* is about the justification or support of statements, explanations, predictions, or theories with empirical content. Basically, they are about factual or empirical truth. There are more or less established or conventional "rules of evidence" for the establishment of truth claims in our culture. *Pragmatic* argument concerns the justification of instrumental recommendations or recipes (how to achieve some result) and about optimal choices, given some range of options and values, goals or preferences.

- *Moral argument* concerns the justification or application of moral norms or the support of moral judgements (often by invoking moral norms or principles, which are taken as valid). We often find moral argument in the allocation of responsibilities or blame, and in defences or excuses, but of course also in deliberations on rights and duties and their meanings for particular situations. *Legal argument* refers to valid constitutional or legal

[73] A recent study compared conflicts about abortion in the US and Germany and found the German debate much more restrained and civil, compared to the United States, where moral hostilities seem to be very strong recently (see the debates on "political correctness", for example).

[74] These distinctions correspond to the distinction of elements of meaning in part I above.

[75] For the time being, I will disregard expressive culture and related forms of argument, which seem less important for public deliberation.

norms or to legal precedents and applies these to particular problems or cases; it is more strictly bounded to pre-given decisions and interpretations as moral argument.[76]

- *Evaluative argument* deals with questions about what is desirable, good, pleasant, beautiful, worthwhile. It can be applied to values (conceptions of the desirable), objects, actions, goals, preferences, life plans or life forms (individual or collective). There is great variety in the ways to settle these questions, or great uncertainty about how to do it. But undoubtedly we find public discussions on these matters.

Metacommunication takes places, when rules or conventions of communication are thematized (e.g. logical errors or violations of standards of evidence or violations of certains norms or principles of fairness are critized) or when misunderstandings or misrepresentations are corrected or denounced.

In public deliberation, these forms of argument are often very much intertwined. The definition of social problems already involves both matters of fact and matters of norm or value, as do discussions about solutions. Moral conflicts are often about specific cases or situations and also involve both the choice and interpretation of relevant norms and the adequate description of the situation and its relevant empirical aspects. The same is obviously true for legal cases (Günther 1988). Nevertheless, one of these dimensions is often dominating. It happens, of course, that some of the participants stress the empirical aspects, while others keep stressing the moral or evaluative dimensions.

It is interesting to see what determines the predominance of certain modes of argument in specific debates or within specific publics, and what the consequences are. One might expect that different categories of speakers will stress different dimensions. Almost by definition, the expert will stress the empirical or cognitive dimension of a topic (because his special expertise is based on empirical knowledge), while intellectuals may often favour moral or evaluative aspects, since they often do not have privileged knowledge about the empirical aspects of a problem.[77]

Moral disagreement and moral argument will generally be more polarizing. But cognitive disagreement is not necessarily more quickly or easily resolved. Also, distrust of expert knowledge or accusations of bias can quickly add a moral dimension to an empirical argument. Many current problems and debates have very important elements of cognitive uncertainty and disagreement (environmental problems, for example, or labor market or other economic problems), which are not at all easily resolved. But these cognitive aspects rarely seem to become the center of public debates. In public discussions, either moral or evaluative aspects are brought to the foreground (as often in environmental debates), or the issues with difficult empirical aspects tend to become less popular (unemployment). In addition, it is often a matter of contention in itself whether the normative or empirical aspects of a problem are stressed, not least because this has to do with the allocation of responsibility. This brings us to another phenomenon: the "framing" of issues and the circulation or proliferation of different frames or interpretive packages for issues or problems.

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[76] Relations and differences between legal and moral argument are a somewhat complicated and controversial topic, which I cannot discuss in any detail, here.

[77] There might be other reasons for this kind of preference, as will be discussed later on.

Symbolic frameworks. In debates, not only answers can differ, but also the way questions are posed, problems are interpreted, issues are described. Definitions of issues or topics do not only differ with respect to the emphasis they put on cognitive, moral or evaluative aspects of an issue, but also with respect to which particular moral aspect or which particular cognitive aspect dominates.[78] This has been described as "framing" (Gamson, Modigliani 1987; Schön, Rein 1994; Gerhards 1995). Often, certain ways of framing the issues will give an advantage to certain kinds of answers.

Framing can be influenced by given cultural interpretations or "semantics", especially by the semantics of particular cultural fields. The different branches of professional or scientific knowledge (law, medicine, psychology, educational theory, economics, social and political science, history, natural sciences) have all developed their own conceptual frameworks, languages and typical perspectives which can be applied to or imported into public discourse.[79] These professional perspectives, with the possible exceptions of law, history, education and parts of political and social science will generally stress the empirical or cognitive aspects of problem definitions, using the language of the respective profession or discipline. This has led to discussions whether a predominance of certain professional or scientific framework implies a devaluation of everyday experience and especially a devalution of ordinary moral and evaluative language.[80]

In Germany, in particular, since the 60s there has been a certain conservative critique of the alleged redefinition of moral problems and moral responsibilities by social science and educational theories (and sometimes of an undue influence of these perspectives on the legal profession, especially the criminal courts). Blaming "society" for deviant or reprehensible behaviour or for social ills which might just be the effects of such behaviour (e.g. family break-ups) is said to relieve every wrongdoer from his personal responsibility. Conservatives sometimes miss the point that sociological explanations of certain behaviours or problems often only imply a somewhat different allocation, not a general abolition of moral responsibility. This depends, of course, on the kind of explanation which is applied. Anyway, the left often stresses moral responsibilities for social and political problems and conditions where the right tends to see some kind of inexorable logic of development.

4.2.3 Levels of abstraction or generality, "genres" of public deliberation

Public controversies and debates have different levels of abstraction and generality. At one end of the spectrum are debates which relate to specific aspects of immediate practical problems and political decisions, at the other end, there are debates about general interpretations or collective self-understandings.

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[78] See for example the current controversies on abortion. Which moral aspect is made central: the moral status of the fetus or the women's right to self-determination? (Gerhards 1996) In this case, different moral aspects are stressed. There could be also questions of fact, of course: when does the fetus develop some kind of experience or consciousness?

[79] See Giesen (1983) for an instructive analysis how different frameworks, some of them derived from professional perspectives, are applied to a particular problem (in this case, drug addiction).

[80] For an early example, see Rieff 1973.

Sometimes, general debates emerge from conflicts about immediate political decisions or as reactions to particular events (examples are the German debates and protest movements relating to the deployment of NATO middle range missiles in the 80s, or reactions to the Gulf War, or the civil wars in former Yugoslavia, or the reactions to the events of 1989). But there are also more permanent topics, which reappear on the public agenda with a certain regularity: disturbing features of the younger generation, gender and family relations, the crisis of the welfare state, several kinds of secular loss and decline (morality, community, solidarity, meaning), national history and identity.

There are also - at least in Germany - certain recognizable "genres" of more general public debate. More precisely, there is a genre with two sub-divisions. The genre is "Zeitdiagnose" ("diagnosis of our time").[81] It comprises debates on general social or cultural changes and historical developments, combining in an often diffuse way descriptions, prognoses, evaluations and the identification of problems, ills or pathologies. These diagnoses may relate to the "state of nation", or they may have large scopes, e.g. "modernity" (mostly understood as the Western world during a certain time-period) or to the fate of humanity as a whole. The sub-species are "crises debates" and what I would call "threshold debates". "Crises debates" will be familiar. They usually bundle together a range of problematic or threatening social or cultural developments, suggest some connection between them, possibly some common structural causes, and often predict that things will get worse before there may be a chance of betterment (which could only be achieved by some major structural transformation). "Threshold debates" are about the question whether we are just in the midst or just past or just awaiting some fundamental, epochal social transformation, whether there is a new historical stage or a new type of society (e.g. a post-something epoch or age, or an information society or risk society, to name familiar examples).[82] Obviously the two subspecies are often combined, but that's not always so. Now I am not suggesting that there is necessarily something wrong about these kinds of debate; I am simply noting that they are recurring forms of public debate. We could try to describe the typical features of these genres in more detail, we could look for typical effects, and we could ask what the reasons for their popularity are, but I will have to leave that for later occasions.[83]

Here I will only make a few observations: If we look at public debates, not least the more ambitious "grand debates", some peculiar features are very often apparent: Hyperbole, excitement, dramatization. Orientation towards novelty and towards dramatic problems - proliferation of novel trends, imminent changes, dramatic and profound changes, urgent problems and dangers. There is some similarity to features of news selection and presentation, which have been described as "news values" - criteria by which editors choose and frame news stories (Galtung, Ruge 1965; Gans 1979; Staab 1990). Editors use these

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81 For slightly different descriptions of this genre, see Reese-Schäfer 1996; Wewer 1989.

82 "Threshold debates" often go hand in hand with debates about historical "master trends", like "individualization" or "globalization". Debates about such master trends also tend to suggest some basic threshold of development.

83 There are other typical, less general forms or genres of public debate. Some have been described in the literature: e.g. "scandals", "moral panics" and the array of "social problems". Here, however, I will only look at debates at the most general level. Public debates about scandals might not easily lead to a more general questioning of beliefs or collective interpretations, by the way, because debates about scandals appeal to valid norms and values, denounce their violation and ask for punishment or retribution. In this way, they are conservative rituals.

features to catch the attention of the public, and similar factors may be at work in public debates.

Simplification is another necessity, even in more high-brow public discourse which is still oriented towards a larger audience. This leads to the use of slogans and catch-phrases (e.g. phrases which seem to indicate the essential character of important changes - all combinations with "society" or "age" or "revolution" or "generation"). There is also a peculiar "syndrom" style of analysis: the bundling together of phenomena which are described as indicative of a general trend (results of some deeper transformation or at least somehow connected links of general trend). This is both a way of dramatization and of simplification and the production of meaning in complex situations. That moral aspects are often stressed over cognitive aspects might be due to the fact that they are more publicly assessible (there is no real expert knowledge in this domain), more dramatic and sometimes (if by no means always) a way of simplification.[84]

Still, much of public argumentation (especially routine newspaper and TV commentary) is rather didactic and dull, often not even arguing for and against very specific positions. There is also a large amount of redundancy. Arguments get repeated over and over (the fact that the same arguments are published via so many different communication channels at the same time intensifies this impression).

[84] These stylistic features of public discourse are sometimes contrasted with scientific discourse. Speaking of mass audiences for intellectual contributions, Lewis Coser stated in 1973 that they "are not equipped to judge the accuracy, the mastery or depth of a contribution, but they are sufficiently well-educated to judge a work in terms of surface characteristics of style and presentation. They are likely to ask not whether what is asserted is true or significant, but whether it is startling. ... In otherwise heterogenous audiences, only the new and the brilliant can provide suitable conversation pieces, allowing everyone to display his recently acquired knowledge as a badge of status." (Coser 1973, 49) There is some questionable general soupçon against the audience. But is not the implicit contrast to academic discourse overdrawn, as well? At least if we look at the social sciences and the humanities, some of those "news values" seem to be at work... We only have to look at the proliferation of "crisis theories" over the last three decades. - For the observation that there are similarities and sliding transitions between scientific and public discourse, see also Hilgartner 1990.

5. Public Culture, processes and structures of public deliberation: some interrelations

5.1 The Reproduction of public culture in public deliberation - some general observations

Public culture, as described above, is involved in public deliberation in several ways. Ideas and interpretations which are parts of the cultural repertoire function as a background and as a resource for public deliberation, as unstated assumptions and as a reservoir for the articulation of specific ideas. In public debates, parts of the cultural repertoire are articulated, while other parts remain as an implicit horizon of assumptions and presuppositions, and still other parts, which are not relevant to the particular debate, remain stored in personal memories (or in "external memory" - texts and other forms of cultural storage). The articulation of certain elements of public culture can be done in two ways. These elements can be invoked as valid, authoritative, self-evident, and as support for assertions or claims. Or they can be questioned, criticized, contested and, in response, defended or supported. Through these processes, public culture is constantly both reproduced and transformed. Parts of public culture are confirmed and passed on, while other parts are revised or invented anew.[85]

The focus of public debates can be more narrow (oriented towards questions of immediate practical relevance and towards specific disputed aspects of such issues), and more general or fundamental. It is in these wide-ranging "grand debates" that public interpretations and collective self-understandings are most clearly articulated and disputed. To illustrate the way in which this happens, we could look at the debates about "national identity".

In Germany, a host of books and journal articles about "national identity" has appeared since the 1980s. But debates about national identity or collective interpretations (as defined in Part I of this paper) can be found throughout the postwar years of the German federal republic, if not always under the title "national identity".[86] There have been debates about the character of Germany in the past and Western Germany in the present, about particularities of its social and political system and of its culture and even the social-psychological make-up of its population, about its relation to the GDR and the problem of national unity, about its relations to other countries, above all its special relations to "the West". And there have been debates about the German past, especially in this century, more particularly about National Socialism and about the consequences of this past for the new Germany. If the debates about the recent national past had been somewhat muted in the earlier post-war years, they certainly erupted in the 60s and have been a very important element in West German public debates ever since.[87] The "Historikerstreit" of the early 90s and the recent "Goldhagen Debate", as

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[85] Public communication is usually discussed with respect to the formation of "public opinion", which is largely understood as political opinion, or with respect to the signalling or articulation of public opinion vis-à-vis the political decision makers (Gerhards, Neidhardt 1991; Gerhards 1994). Here I look to broader effects or functions of public deliberation concerning the reproduction of public culture, as should be obvious already.

[86] I am leaving out developments in the former GDR.

[87] The debates about the Nazi-past within the 60's students movement, however, where peculiar in certain respects. On the one hand, there was a strong element of blame directed against the members of the older generation. On the other hand, there was a strong inclination in large parts of

well as the recent controversies about a public exhibition that documented atrocities of the German army in the East during the war are well-known examples. But in many important public debates, from the controversies about a West German army in the 50s to the problem of the official recognition of the post-war boundary changes in the East, to the debates of German unification, the debates about German military participation in NATO or UN missions or the questions of immigration and asylum policy, interpretations of the German past and its consequences for present-day Germany loom very large. Recently, a "second past", that of the former GDR, has been included in the debate, with many attempts to draw parallels and distinctions.

It is not possible to describe the issues and developments of these debates in more detail here. Suffice it to say that these are not just general debates about general problems or principles of the political order. Universalist normative positions and arguments play a role, of course. But there are very strong elements of collective interpretation in the sense described above - of the interpretation of the specific history, experience, character and situation of a national collectivity. Interestingly, it is predominantly the left, although generally universalist and cosmopolitan in outlook, which tends not only to stress the specific features or the uniqueness of German history (above all of National Socialism and its crimes), but also insists on deriving specific normative consequences from this history, apart from the general consequence that we should vigilantly defend democracy, liberalism and enlightenment universalism. These consequences concern specific collective responsibilities or obligations, from restitution to duties of remembrance to peculiar restraints in international politics. Parts of the right, on the other hand, insist that Germany should not be unduly burdened or bound by its past, but should behave like any other state, or like any other state of comparable size and might, in defending its national interests on the international scene (whatever that may imply). Sometimes this claim is backed by attempts to "historicize" or "relativize" the German past, as known from the "Historikerstreit". This is, of course, also an attempt to establish a "positive" national identity, with stronger national pride and so on, instead of the more self-critical identity posited by the left.

What is *not* apparent in these debates, by the way, is the element of *ethnic* (or "völkisch") national identity which is so often ascribed to Germany - not only as a feature of the past, but also of the present.[88] This element is almost completely lacking in public debates, except as

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the movement to see national socialism in a universal, not specifically national frame, and to articulate lessons or consequences in international terms, so to speak. Fascism was to be blamed on capitalism (if not on modernity), and the international abolishment of capitalism often seemed more important than more specific consequences or responsibilities for the German situation. (In this respect, the situation in the GDR was similar.) It may have to to with this point of view that parts of the student movement had difficulties acknowledging a special relationship between Germany and Israel. But this was a passing phenomenon.

88 See e.g. the literature about current immigration policies, but also more general pieces on nationalism and national identity (Koopmans, Kriesi 1997; Schnapper 1995; Brubaker 1992 - with some qualifications). In the light of all the criticisms of cultural homogeneity, "essentialism" and so on, this is a surprising tendency. Often the assertion of an "ethnic" character of the German conception of nationhood is derived in a circular way. It is taken as an *indication* of ethnic nationalism that Germany has restrictive naturalization policies and still has ius sanguinis as the central element of its citizenship law. At the same time, such an ethnic conception of nationhood is treated as a causal factor in the explanation of these policies. But restrictive naturalization policies could be explained in a number of ways. There are no attempts to establish the existence of ethnic self-conceptions independently, at least not for post-war Western Germany.

a straw man for the critics of nationalism, and except for some mutterings from the right fringe, which generally remain confined to right wing publications. The discourse of the right rarely appeals to an ethnic conception of nationhood, but is primarily based on conceptions of raison d'état and "realist" power politics ("Machtpolitik"). This kind of *statist* orientation does not need any "ethnic" foundations. Of course there are elements of cultural nationalism in the sense of appeals to German cultural traditions, and there are more general appeals to a continuing national history. In this respect, however, Germany is certainly not any different from other Western countries.[89]

This example shows that it may be useful to look at public debates for *evidence* concerning features of the public culture.

Can we also learn something from this example about the *effects* of public deliberation on public culture? From opinion polls and other evidence we can conclude that there have been enormous changes in West German collective interpretations during the post-war period, concerning the view of the Nazi period and support for liberal-democratic principles and practices. These cultural changes were closely linked to generational succession. We may assume that the extensive public debates on German national identity and interpretations of the past have had some influence on these changes. But so far we have little evidence on the precise nature of this influence.

In fact, this example should be a cautionary one with respect to the role of public deliberation for the reproduction and change of public culture. For there are other ways in which public culture is transmitted, and other factors affecting its change. Public culture is transmitted through socialization in the family, the peer group, the educational system. It is reproduced by private communication and debate. It is expressed and transmitted in non-discursive forms of public communication: public rituals, literature, the arts and popular culture or entertainment, monuments, museums.[90]

Last not least, public culture is of course affected not only by deliberative forms of discursive communication, but also by simple factual information or news, as well as by *experience*.

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89 Nor are *these* conceptions of national identity confined to a "nationalist" right. The left does not really deny that there is some kind of historical unity, based on cultural transmission and links between successive generations, transcending radical discontinuities of the political order. As indicated above, this understanding is an obvious, even if often implicit presupposition of the debates about the German past, of the demand that Germans have to learn from *their* history, have some kind of responsibility to draw consequences from *their* common past. See Habermas' interesting statement (in a "laudatio" for Daniel Goldhagen): "In Diskursen der Selbstverständigung, die durch Filme, Fernsehserien und Ausstellungen ebenso wie durch historische Darstellungen oder 'Affären' angeregt werden, streiten wir uns nicht über kurzfristige Ziele und Politiken, sondern über Formen des erwünschten politischen Zusuammenlebens, auch über Werte, die im politischen Gemeinwesen Vorrang haben sollen. Gleichzeitig geht es darum, in welchen Hinsichten wir uns als Bürger dieser Republik gegenseitig achten können - und als wer wir von anderen anerkannt werden möchten. Dafür bildet die nationale Geschichte einen wichtigen Hintergrund. Nationale Überlieferungen und Mentalitäten, die Teil unserer eigenen Person geworden sind, reichen nämlich weit hinter die Anfänge dieser Republik zurück. ... Vorausgesetzt, daß die jeweils lebenden Generationen in der Art ihres Denkens und Empfindens, in der Gestik des Ausdrucks und in der Weise ihrer Wahrnehmung über ein Gespinst kultureller Fäden mit Lebensform und Denkweise vergangener Generationen verknüpft sind..." (Habermas 1997).

90 This is e.g. very evident in the ways in which "collective memory" is produced or transmitted, as the burgeoning literature on this phenomenon has demonstrated.

Even if mere news reporting or transmission of factual information is not in itself deliberative communication, news and information are of course a most important background or ingredient of deliberation. And to the role of experience: Many public beliefs can be *tested* in practice and thereby be affirmed or put into question. Public deliberation provides interpretations of frames for information and experiences, but it does not replace them. National socialism or communism were not primarily discredited by public deliberation - but first of all by experience with or information about their results (and in the case of National Socialism by the experiences of military defeat). But the interpretation of these experiences needed deliberation. It is not too easy to separate these influences in explaining cultural change.

5.2 Some further questions and conjectures

Despite these cautionary remarks, it seems plausible to assume that public deliberation is an important influence on the development of public culture, especially an important source of cultural change. On the other hand, public deliberation itself is not only regulated by the social and symbolic structures which were described above, but it is also influenced by public culture itself, which provides the background understandings, the resources and materials for deliberation.[91] Here are some final conjectures about these interrelationships, especially about possible variations, which delineate topics for further research.

- First, the question of differentiation or fragmentation again. This concerns both public culture and public deliberation. If public culture is to a certain degree articulated in and reproduced by public deliberation, then differences in public culture should be apparent in the differentiation of the debating public, and the segmentation of public deliberation should in turn produce differences in public culture. In public debates, different parts of the whole cultural repertoire are drawn upon, according to the differentiation of the public (in camps, issue publics, stratified layers, and special categories of participants). It is an important empirical question how much these segments of the public have in common and how loosely or tightly the various universes of discourse are linked by communication and the flow of ideas. The description of the main forms of differentiation gives some indications for possible connections (opposing camps, for instance, are to a certain degree oriented towards each other), but not very much is empirically known. The study of the differentiation of the public and the flows of public communications seems to be a promising way to find out how much common or shared public culture there is or to what degree culture is really segmented or fragmented.

  Some degree of differentiation of the sphere of public deliberation (into issue publics, camps and layers of participants which are stratified with respect to intensity of participation, authority and influence) is inevitable (Peters 1994). In large publics, not everybody can be heard, so a division into speakers and audiences is necessary. The range and complexity of issues which are publicly debated make some kind of specialization, some division of attention and concern necessary. The orientation towards camps is (among other things) a necessary way of cognitive simplification. But the degree

[91] The symbolic structures of public deliberation might themselves be regarded as parts of public culture. This is a matter of terminology.

of differentiation and its specific forms is quite variable. Specific causes and effects of patterns of differentiation in the public sphere would be an important subject for research.

Differentiation is not always segmentation or fragmentation, however. Segmentation or fragmentation exists if the members of different publics do not only have different beliefs or different concerns, but also do not talk much to each other, do not pay close attention to each other, but communicate primarily among themselves. The division into camps may mean that there is vigorous debate between camps or at least within each camp about the positions of the other. It can also mean that the members of different camps have only very rudimentary knowledge about each other, stick to simple stereotypes and do not take notice of the details of each other's positions. Only in the latter case do we have fragmentation.

This also applies to stratification. By public "elites" we may understand parts of the public or particular publics with a very high degree of participation in public debate and a high degree of intellectual sophistication, demonstrated by the ability to understand or produce complex argumentations. Such elites can be *influential* elites or *segmented* elites. Influential elites are those who are opinion leaders for larger publics, who have a considerable influence on deliberations and beliefs within larger publics. Segmented elites debate mainly among themselves, do not have much influence on other publics, may have different concerns than the larger publics. Segmented public elites may be able to have some influence on *other* elites, especially political decision-makers, but this is not done by deliberation and opinion-making in larger publics.

This is a rather simplified schema, but it may capture aspects of stratification in the public sphere which are meant when e.g. elite domination in public deliberation is criticized or the isolation of intellectual elites is lamented. It must be noted, however, that "intellectual" is just one category of speakers in public deliberation and that there might be other public elites (journalists, experts, advocates) with different characteristics.[92] The concerns of intellectuals are often described as being detached from the concerns of a larger public.[93] In Germany, public debates with strong intellectual participation have rarely dealt with economic questions or matters of social policy in the last years. That may be indicative of

[92] In this paper it was more or less taken for granted that the sphere of public deliberation is still basically a national phenomenon. We could regard national boundaries as another form of differentiation and ask, how open or closed to internatonal influences the national social spheres are. We could look at importation of TV content, for publication of books or articles by foreign authors, appearances of foreign speakers at meetings and conferences. We could also try to estimate the relative influence of foreign speakers and of ideas who originated in other countries.
I would say that Germany would count as rather open to foreign contributions or influences (maybe less open than some smaller European countries, probably more open than France, the U.S. and Great Britain). There has been a range of intellectual imports from France in the post-war period, in several waves (existentialism, structuralism, post-structuralism). But this influence was confined mainly to the intellectual parts of the public. The main external influences or imports evidently came and still come from the United States (and to a much smaller extent from Britain). Some important topics of public debate have emerged under American influence. The 68 students movement was heavily influenced by the American civil rights and student movements, its issues (Vietnam) and tactics (civil disobedience). The same is true for gender issues, the environmental concerns of the 70s, the more recent debates on issues of "multiculturalism", "difference" and "identity". Many arguments and positions on these issues have also been imported. This may partly have to do with the strong position of American political and moral philosophy and American social science.

[93] For the U.S., see Brint 1994; Rorty 1991; Jacoby 1987; Jacoby 1994.

a certain distance between the concerns of intellectuals and those of larger publics. It has also been suspected that German journalists are mostly oriented towards their own professional group or milieu, without much regard for the opinions and concerns of the larger public.[94] But empirical evidence again is weak in all these cases. Since the examples touch upon the bigger question on the nature and distribution of intellectual influence and the role of elite culture in contemporary societies, it seems worthwhile to study these phenomena more closely.

– Openness of public deliberation: We can imagine a field of public deliberation as being more or less conducive to the questioning or examination of beliefs, to the production of new arguments or new evidence, and to the acceptance of new arguments and evidence after examination. Parts of this phenomenon were already mentioned above as forms of "closure": the exclusion of participants from the sphere of deliberation, the denial of respect, either because viewpoints are seen as unreasonable or evil, or because the speakers are suspected of questionable motives or false consciousness. There are more ways, however, in which discussions can be restricted or closed. Orthodoxies or unquestioned authority can be maintained, unusual arguments or viewpoints ignored, misunderstood or distorted. There are elements of "doxa" in every discussion, of course. Not everything can be questioned in a given debate. But the degree of dogmatism might be quite variable.

  In part, this may depend on more general features of public culture: on the degree to which it generally relies on authority and unquestioned traditions, or the degree to which it encourages inquiry, questioning, inventiveness. A certain "reflexivity" of this kind is a general feature of most of modern culture, but it would be interesting to study its limits and variations in different contexts (changes over time, between countries, between issue areas).[95] The degree of dogmatism might also be influenced not just by the general culture, but by specific cultural milieus, features of issue publics or camps, and it might be influenced by social structures - for instance by the degree of polarization or hostility between camps or by structures of stratification.

  The question of openness can also be posed with respect to the selection of topics. Selection is always necessary, of course, because the capacity of public deliberation is limited (even if quite variable given the differentiation into issue publics which specialize on certain topics - a kind of "division of deliberative labour"). But are there systematic biases, blind spots, exclusions of topics, denials of problems, selection of issues not as a result of open competition and discussion, but determined by hidden influences. Since "bias" is a counterfactual notion here and would have to be measured by some standard of open or unbiased selection of issues, this is again a very difficult question. But it

[94] For the German case, see Kepplinger 1979. For an empirical critique of these assumptions, see Schönbach, Stürzebrecher, Schneider 1994.

[95] There have been various criticisms of modern culture in this respect: the thesis of a dominance of "instrumental rationality", i.e. the dominance of empirical or pragmatic discourse over normative discourse, or criticisms of other one-sided notions of rationality or of "enlightenment fundamentalism" - the unwillingness to question certain basic features of the modernist worldview. But so far these suspicions have rarely been studied empirically in the area of public discourse. (The thesis of a dominance of "instrumental rationality" seems somewhat questionable empirically, for instance.)

certainly seems worthwhile to ponder over it, especially since statements of selection bias are often made in public debate (e.g. the claim the Nazi past has been "repressed" in German public debates in the 50s or similar claims about collective historical amnesia in other countries).[96]

In this context, another diagnosis would have to be considered too: the thesis, that not biased selection of issues, but the lack of selectivity is the problem (Klapp 1978) - that the agenda of public deliberation is overcrowded, that there is too much "noise", a lack of discrimination between important and less important issues, and a corresponding diffusion of attention, lack of orientation and disappearance of meaningful common debates.

- Orientation towards consensus: Is public deliberation oriented towards consent or agreement? Do spheres of public deliberation differ in this respect - are there more contentious and more consensual publics? In Germany, there has been some excited debate on this point, especially in connection with Habermas' notion of discourse (where the goal of reasoned agreement is treated as a necessary presupposition of participants in "true" discourse) (Giegel 1992). Now sociologists after Parsons tend to favour conflict over consensus. Consensus smacks of a too harmonious picture of society, and also of conformity.[97] And of course "orientation to consensus" could be understood as pressure to conform and discouragement of dissent.[98] These suspicions can hardly be justified in the case of Habermas, who merely claimed that we cannot seriously speak of a serious discussion unless the opponents make a sincere effort to convince each other by reasoned argument and let themselves be convinced in this way.

  But how often is such an attitude actually found in public disputes? And how often are disputes resolved by reasoned agreement, when one side or all sides admit that they were at least partially wrong, and that a certain position has been most convincingly supported and therefore has to be accepted?

  In public debates, this style sometimes occurs when issues are very unsettled, when they do not fit into existing frames, cannot easily be linked to existing camps and partisanships. But most of the time the debate is more advocatory. Arguments are not primarily directed to opponents with the aim to convince *them*, but to an audience, to the by-standers, or even to the members of one's own camp. The triadic structure of much of public communication, where speakers do not primarily talk to other speakers, but to an audience, often a mass media audience, and where speakers are often not even co-

[96] There is a considerable literature on "agenda setting", relating to the mass media or the agenda of political decision making. In this literature, various paths in which issues get on the public agenda are described (top down, bottom up and so on), and the roles of collective actors and institutions (mass media organizations, government and administration, parties, movements) and of categories of participants are considered. Sometimes, more general factors which give certain issues a comparative advantage over others in the competition for public attention ("news values") are also considered. Finally, typical "career paths" of issues following their appearance on the public agenda are described. This seems an interesting and useful research perspective, not least with respect to the question of possible bias or, more generally, with respect to the selectivity of public deliberation. For reasons of time and space, I cannot discuss this research in more detail here.

[97] There is also the criticism that modern societies do not have to depend on consensus for social order or integration. But that's another matter.

[98] It is in this sense, I think, that Japan is sometimes described as a society oriented towards consensus.

present, either in one room or on the same page, supports this style (Gerhards, Neidhardt 1991; Staab 1991).

There is also no social pressure to reach agreement (as in most situations when practical decisions have to be made, or in closer circles or milieus, when unresolved disagreement may be disturbing). On the contrary, speakers live by disagreement and dissidence. There is usually not even a need to strive for majority support. Often, primarily the approval of smaller audiences, of certain circles or one's own camp is sought. Competition for the intellectual and moral leadership of a camp often puts a premium on intransigence, or on the demonstration of peculiar sensibilities and moral sensitivities. Speakers have to present themselves as stout defenders of the values they represent. They have to prove acute powers of observation and diagnosis. All this often leads to a style that is not only somewhat dramatic, but also accusatory. And this is normally not conducive to reaching agreement beyond one's own circle or camp.

Should we conclude that there is small chance for real discussion or argument? This would be premature. There are still norms and practices of civility, of respect for opponents, of duties to listen and to acknowledge criticism. There is often a moderating influence of neutral or less partisan publics. To be the intellectual leader of a camp is not the only attractive position for speakers. There is also the role of the independent mind or that of the neutral arbiter. Contending arguments often cannot simply be ignored if they get into public circulation. They have to be answered directly or indirectly.

Agreements are often reached in an indirect way, not by public concessions and acknowledgements. Some ideas gain influence, others become obsolete, discredited or only slowly forgotten. And debates which do not lead to any convincing solution still might show the difficulties or uncertainties, clarify some aspects, rule out some bad arguments, even support a readiness to compromise and to continue the search for a resolution (van den Daele 1996).

So orientation towards consensus in debates and the degrees of consensus after some debates might not be the most useful variables. Instead, we should look for forms or degrees of civility, the complexity of arguments, the openness for or anticipation of criticism or doubt (even if only implicit, without explicit reference to opposing positions). And we should look at changes in public culture which can be linked to the diffusion of certain arguments by way of public deliberation, and the loss of credibility of other arguments through criticism and counterargument, and not at some acknowledged consensus.

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